

Bomb explodes in Rabat Russian embassy

RABAT (R) — An Egyptian man who appeared to be mentally deranged detonated a home-made bomb at the consular section of the Russian embassy in Rabat on Tuesday, a source close to the Moroccan Interior Ministry said. The source said the man, Khaled Ahmad Mahmoud Awad, 37, was seriously injured in the noon blast. No Russian diplomats were hurt. "The man made incoherent remarks to the consular staff, sometimes in Arabic and sometimes in English," the source said. He said Awad spoke of a Russian wife living in Cairo and that he was worried about her security. His motives for the attack were not known. Russia's ITAR-TASS said a small poster was found on the attacker with the word "Chechnya" written in Arabic. The agency said the man was killed in the bomb blast, but the source and a Russian diplomat in Rabat said he was being treated in hospital.

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Gaza prisoners on hunger strike

GAZA CITY (AFP) — About 40 prisoners have launched an indefinite hunger strike demanding to be released from the Palestinian National Authority's prison in Gaza City, two groups said Tuesday. "They will continue until they are released," vowed Imad Fajali, a leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas. He told AFP that 15 Hamas men were among the prisoners who have been taking only water and salt since Monday. The other 25 are members of Islamic Jihad.

New coalition formed in Yemen

SANAA (AFP) — Fourteen left-wing and Arab nationalist parties announced Tuesday they were setting up an opposition coalition to boost democracy and public freedoms in Yemen. In a statement published in the capital the group said it would also work for political pluralism and economic reforms. It said it wanted "to establish a permanent dialogue with the government and fight against all forms of corruption and mismanagement." The coalition, headed by Abdul Wahab Mahmoud from the Baath Party, also includes a branch of the Yemeni Socialist Party thrown out of the government coalition for its role in backing southern separatists in the May-July civil war last year.

Bid fails to impeach Kuwait minister

KUWAIT (AP) — Islamic lawmakers failed Tuesday to impeach their liberal adviser, Education Minister Ahmad Al Rubai, but vowed to keep after him until he resigns. Tuesday's parliament session was the latest and sharpest confrontation between the emirate's Western-reformers and its Muslim fundamentalists. The impeachment move against Mr. Rubai, a professor of Islamic philosophy, was the first against a cabinet minister. Twenty-one Islamic legislators and their tribal supporters voted against Mr. Rubai in a vote of confidence they demanded last week after interrogating him on alleged financial and other irregularities at the state-run Kuwait University. But they were two votes short of the necessary majority.

Alexander announces bid

MARYVILLE (AFP) — Former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander announced his presidential bid Tuesday as the Republicans stepped up their push to win back the White House. Billing himself as a Washington outsider, Mr. Alexander chose his hometown of Maryville, Tennessee to launch his populist campaign, wearing his trademark red and black flannel shirt and striking a folksy note. "We must take responsibility for the future of our country by taking responsibility for our neighborhoods, schools, our families and ourselves," Mr. Alexander told the crowd in the foothills of the Smokey Mountains.

Environment expert arrested in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — An environmental expert who serves as a state consultant was arrested Tuesday for allegedly giving false testimony on Lebanon's toxic waste scandal. Pierre Malichef was arrested after Judge Said Mirza issued a warrant, judicial sources said. They said he was accused of spreading false information, fabricating evidence and inciting others to defame the truth. Mr. Malichef has said in a television debate that toxic waste was scattered around the entire country. According to the environmental group Greenpeace, 10,000 barrels of waste are still in Lebanon where some was burned in 1988 polluting water and soil, old as fertilizer, and dumped in sea or in mountains north-east of Beirut.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية. الراي.

Jordan's moves aim at better future for people of Middle East — King

HM meets delegations from Jewish organisations and Wiesenthal centre Los Angeles centre awards prize to King

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Centre on Tuesday announced that it was awarding its annual prize for peace to His Majesty King Hussein in recognition of his record for tolerance and commitment to peace.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, head of a delegation from the centre now visiting Jordan, said the King, during a meeting with the delegation Tuesday evening, agreed to accept the award and also to visit the centre's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles this year to make a speech and accept

the prize. Previous recipients of the award include former U.S. President Ronald Reagan, Queen Sofia of Spain, French President Francois Mitterrand and human rights activist Andrei Sakharov.

The meeting with the Simon Wiesenthal delegation was one of two meetings the King held on Tuesday with visiting American delegations. The other was with a team from the Conference of Presidents of major American Jewish organisations.

In his meeting with the Conference of Presidents delegation, the King was quoted as saying that what Jordan achieved towards the

establishment of peace in the Middle East was aimed at serving the interest and future of the people of the region.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted the King as saying also that Jordan was committed to pursuing efforts to achieve a just and durable peace in the region and to attain a higher standard of living in a secure and stable atmosphere for future generations.

The delegation voiced the organisation's appreciation of Jordan's stand and the King's commitment to peace in the region, Petra reported.

(Continued on page 7)

Iran deployed Hawk missiles in Gulf, U.S. general says

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Iran has deployed Hawk anti-aircraft missiles on island bases near the mouth of the Gulf, increasing worries about Tehran's capabilities to intercept oil shipping in the waterway, the top U.S. general said Tuesday.

"They have right now deployed Hawk missile systems. The other day they started putting missiles on their launchers, which they had not done before," Army General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters.

President Bill Clinton would not comment on the development, saying, "I think I'll wait until later to answer any questions." He was asked about the missiles during a photo session with Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok.

Hawks are U.S.-made anti-aircraft missiles. Iran and the United Arab Emirates across the Gulf have a long-standing dispute over three islands in the area. Gen. Shalikashvili did not identify the islands the Iranians were moving the missiles to but referred to them as Iran's.

At a breakfast meeting with reporters, Gen. Shalikashvili said U.S. reconnaissance also has spotted the Iranians moving artillery into forward positions on its islands in the Hormuz Strait. "All of that could lead me to lots of conclusions," he said. One of them is that they want to have the capability to intercept the traffic in the Strait of Hormuz.

The Strait is among the most important oil-tanker routes in the world. "We are watching it very carefully," Gen. Shalikashvili said.

He said that at the moment, Iraq still is regarded as the major military threat in the Gulf region.

"But I think as you look towards the end of the century, the beginning of the next century, we have to be very mindful that Iran can become that major threat," he said.

He said that if Iran is able to develop weapons of mass destruction, "I think we would face a very, very serious challenge and all our friends in that area would

face a very serious challenge. I am very worried about Iran."

The United States has been trying without success to persuade Russia to cancel plans to sell a nuclear power plant to Iran. The Russians contend the plant is of a design that makes it very difficult to extract material for nuclear weapons.

Iran-owned Hawks are older U.S.-made missiles. They were sold in the past to Iran by Washington, but they still have capability to shoot down low-flying attack aircraft, according to experts.

Gen. Shalikashvili said the deployment fed growing concern among military leaders at the Pentagon, in the Middle East and elsewhere about Iran's growing military capability and its aims in the region.

Iran has also bought diesel submarines from Russia, and Gen. Shalikashvili worried about "what they are doing in the Straits of Hormuz and why they are forward-positioning some military systems on some of their islands."

Israeli jets buzz Baalbek; gunboats maintain siege

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (Agencies) — Israeli warplanes buzzed the birthplace of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah in eastern Lebanon Tuesday and a gunboat off the southern coast fired warning shots to enforce a three-week-old fishing blockade, police reported.

Sporadic shelling exchanges erupted in South Lebanon and Israel's surrogate militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), reported it killed three guerrillas trying to infiltrate the Israeli-occupied "security zone" along the border.

Security sources could not confirm the fatalities. Israel has not blockaded ports in South Lebanon but has "closed the sea," army chief of staff General Amnon Shihab argued.

"We have no intention of blocking the passage of ships," Gen. Shihab told the parliamentary committee for defence and foreign affairs. "It's a 'closure' of the sea for security reasons," he said, according to a spokesman for the closed-door meeting.

Gen. Shihab, who was asked about the navy tactics, did not explain the difference between what the Lebanese have called a blockade and he

considers a closure. In the southern Lebanese port of Tyre, fishermen said Israeli patrol boats fired at them for a second straight day on Tuesday as they tried to run the 16-day blockade. The blockade of Tyre and Samara since Feb. 8 was extended northwards to Sidon last Thursday.

Israel's Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur said the move was intended to pressure Beirut to prevent Hizbollah guerrilla attacks in and around the "security zone" in south Lebanon.

But Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bouez has said the blockade, which is crippling the livelihood of around 1,000 fishermen, was an "absolutely unjustified aggression."

Lebanon has appealed to the United Nations and the international community to help end the blockade.

The Israeli army chief of staff also admitted that his forces had mistakenly hit civilians in South Lebanon in the past.

Israeli soldiers have "fired at Lebanese villages which are used to launch anti-Israeli attacks" but they take care to avoid civilian losses, Gen. Shihab said.

The spiralling tension cast a pall of uncertainty over next week's Middle East shuttle by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who will try to break a year-old stalemate in Syrian and Lebanese peace talks with Israel.

The SLA's Voice of the South radio station reported that militiamen entrenched on Sojod Hill shot three guerrillas shortly after midday (1000 GMT) in the zone's central sector.

A Beirut spokesman for Hizbollah said its men engaged SLA fighters trying to sneak out of the zone.

The security sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said sporadic mortar and artillery shelling erupted in the early afternoon.

Earlier Tuesday, the SLA freed 27 prisoners it had held in Khiam prison in the zone for allegedly collaborating with the guerrillas.

The SLA's headquarters in Marjayoun, the main town in the zone, said the release was a goodwill gesture to mark 'Eid Al Fitr. It said five more detainees will be freed Wednesday.



KING HOSTS IFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday hosted an iftar in honour of tribal chiefs and representatives of the public and private institutions in Amman Governorate. The banquet, which was held at Basman Palace, was attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Royal Court Chief

Marwan Al Qasbi, the King's advisors, Interior Minister Salah Hamdan, Greater Amman Mayor Mamdouh Al Abbadi, Amman Governor Talast Al Nawaish and Sheikh Ahmad Helwel, the Royal Court Imam. King Hussein and the guests performed Al Maghreb prayers together (Petra photo)

Arafat slams settlements; 2 Gaza colonies may be moved

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat, speaking before the start of a U.N. Security Council debate on Jewish settlements on Tuesday, called them a "cancer" on Palestinian land and a violation of the PLO's peace accords with Israel.

"Today the Security Council meets not by chance to discuss the subject of settlements — this settlement cancer by which they (the Israelis) are trying to swallow the land," Mr. Arafat said at the opening of a business conference in the self-ruled Gaza Strip.

"I say this (settlement) is a violation of the (peace) agreement, an attempt to bypass final results which we may reach. I say this is rejected, rejected, rejected."

Israel's U.N. ambassador, Gad Yacobi, told Israeli Radio: "We contend the problem is not settlement but terror."

The Security Council scheduled the debate in response to an Arab group request to address the question of settlements in territory seized by

Israel in the 1967 Middle East war and their impact on the peace process.

The United States had opposed any debate on grounds it would impede peace efforts. Israel takes the view that agreements it signed with the PLO provide for any differences to be settled between them and not at the United Nations.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has insisted the issue of some 140 settlements during the current interim phase of the 1993 Israel-PLO peace deal was a purely Israeli matter. Final-status talks are due to begin no later than May 1996.

But Mr. Peres wants the issue of the isolated Jewish settlement of Netzarim in the Gaza Strip brought before the cabinet, his spokesman said.

Israel's Al Hanishmar daily said on Tuesday Mr. Peres and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin agreed that Netzarim and another isolated settlement in Gaza, Kfar Darom, should be evacuated soon.

Both outposts pose security problems for Israeli forces in the area.

But the newspaper said the Israeli leader first wanted Mr. Arafat to take decisive action against militants who attack Israelis.

Mr. Peres' spokesman said the foreign minister had never made reference to Kfar Darom.

"The foreign minister said that the issue of Netzarim should be brought to a discussion in the cabinet. And of course he emphasised the issue must be coordinated with the prime minister," the spokesman said.

Mr. Rabin's office told Reuters he stood by his position that under the interim peace deal settlements remained in place.

Mr. Rabin curbed settlement building on taking office in 1992, winning \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees and giving peace talks a spur.

But he has allowed intense building to continue in West Bank Jewish settlements surrounding Jerusalem and in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Rabin has said in the past that he would not uproot any settlements before the end of the interim period.

Albright: Italy backs U.S. over sanctions

ROME (Agencies) — The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said on Tuesday she had won a promise from Italy to join the United States in blocking any French or Russian moves to ease U.N. sanctions against Iraq.

Ambassador Madeleine Albright told a news conference after meeting Italian Prime Minister Lamberto Dini that Italy and the United States saw "eye to eye" on keeping sanctions in place.

Diplomats said Ms. Albright's visit to Rome, the last stop on the European leg of her world tour to lobby U.N. Security Council members on the Iraq issue, was to ensure it did not join France in supporting a lifting or easing of the sanctions.

The sources said she wanted a commitment from Mr. Dini's new government, which took office in January, after receiving a promise of support from the previous prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, in December.

"Italy and the U.S. see eye to eye on the importance of keeping pressure on Iraq to comply with the Security Council resolutions," Ms. Albright said. "I'm increasingly confident that no effort to lift the measures will succeed."

Ms. Albright made the tour to counter French and Russian moves to lift the ban on Iraq resuming its once huge oil exports.

A senior U.N. official said Monday a dispute between the United Nations and Iraq over Baghdad's biological weapons programme could be resolved by mid-April and a five-year oil embargo lifted. But resolving this last con-

flict, a necessary precondition to ending the oil embargo on Iraq, hinges on a high-level decision to be made in Baghdad, said Rolf Ekeus, who leads the U.N. commission on Iraqi disarmament.

France, Russia and China have been working for over a month to try to convince the other members of the U.N. Security Council to ease the oil embargo within a few months.

Since the Gulf war ended in 1991, the United Nations has pushed and prodded Iraq to live up to a ceasefire agreement that required destruction of its weapons of mass destruction and monitoring to prevent future production.

The weapons development involved are nuclear, chemical and biological.

Mr. Ekeus briefed the council Monday on his latest visit to the Iraqi capital which he told reporters was "a quite positive experience." He said he may travel to Baghdad again during the second half of March.

The objective of his next visit is to talk to Iraqi authorities about the only remaining point of contention between the U.N. disarmament panel and Iraq: the gaps in information about Iraq's old biological weapons programmes.

"Together with the Iraqi authorities we will try to clear up the remaining issue," he said.

Russian generals say Chechen war not over

SHALI, Russia (Agencies) — Russian jets launched an intense bombing attack on rebel positions southeast of Grozny on Tuesday, while in Moscow senior officials warned that an end to the 11-week conflict was not in sight.

A top Russian military official was quoted as saying that Moscow's troops had killed 7,000 Chechen fighters since they moved into the rebel region 11 weeks ago.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Colonel-General Fyodor Ladygin as saying that rebel Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev still had 14,000 troops, of whom, he said, 5,000 were mercenaries.

Gen. Ladygin heads the main intelligence directorate of the Defence Ministry. There are no reliable casualty figures from the fighting in Chechnya.

Chechnya denies any mercenaries are fighting on its side. The Defence Ministry has said more than 1,100 of its soldiers have been killed. Russia's human rights commission says that 24,000 civilians have died in Grozny alone under Russian bombardment.

The deputy director of the FSK intelligence service, Valentin Sobolev, meanwhile admitted the service's "failure" to capture Mr. Dudayev, who "moves around several times a day, accompanied by 10 to 12 bodyguards, all of them close relatives who are fanatically devoted to him."

Mr. Sobolev told a Moscow press conference the Chechen leader also had the added protection of "200 to 250 well-armed people," but said he had "no doubt

Talibans demand Kabul surrender

KABUL (R) — Afghanistan's newly-emerged Taliban student militia said on Tuesday it had renewed its demand to President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government to surrender.

The demand to surrender and open the gates of Kabul to Taliban forces came from a delegation of the powerful militia in a meeting with senior government officials. Taliban provincial commander Mullah Boor Jan told reporters.

He said the delegation discussed plans for a unified and peaceful Afghanistan, ravaged by 14 years of civil war between guerrilla factions and a former Soviet-backed government and more than three years of factional fighting after the communist government collapsed in 1992.

"We told them that the government is one of the forces involved in the war and we asked them to surrender to the Taliban," Mr. Boor Jan said.

In response, he said, the government offered to work with the Taliban in a coalition government.

"This is unacceptable to us," he said. "If we form a coalition with any of the mujahedeen factions, our holy war will be disturbed by association. The whole nation is fed up with these people and we do not want to be involved with them."

He also expressed doubt about Mr. Rabbani's willingness to hand over power to an interim authority under a United Nations peace plan, accusing the president of seeking excuses for not stepping down.

"We are not at all sure about Rabbani. He has used all sorts of pretexts to delay giving up his job, and we don't think he will do so now," Mr. Boor Jan said.

He stopped short of threatening to attack Kabul, and said a Taliban council would wait until the end of 'Eid Al Fitr before deciding its next step.

Dudayev will end up getting arrested."

On Tuesday, Russian aircraft dropped bombs and blasted rockets on Chechen positions at Novy Atagi, 20 kilometres southeast of Grozny.

After they circled the nearby village of Chechen Aul, an explosion on a nearby hill sent up a cloud of black smoke visible for kilometres. In both areas, Chechen anti-aircraft guns shattered in reply.

Other flashpoints in the frontline between Russian and Chechen forces, stretching in a half-circle south of Grozny, were relatively quiet on Tuesday, following overnight artillery fire.

Meanwhile, at the Russian military base of Mozdok, near Chechnya, Interior Minister Viktor Yerin said that peace negotiations were underway between the Russian government and rebels loyal to Mr. Dudayev.

In an interview with the news agency Interfax during a government meeting on the post-war rehabilitation of Grozny, Mr. Yerin said: "We lay great hopes on the talks." However, he added, the rebels had shown no will to compromise.

In Moscow, Gen. Ladygin warned that the Dudayev regime could not be eliminated soon, even though he said 7,000 rebel soldiers had been killed.

Quoted by Interfax, he told a defence ministry conference on the Chechen conflict: "It is impossible to eliminate in the near future the bandit regime in Chechnya."

Gen. Ladygin said Dudayev's rebel forces numbered 14,000.

Morocco gets new cabinet

RABAT (Agencies) King Hassan of Morocco has approved a new government mainly of centre-right politicians and technocrats, an official statement said.

The 36-member cabinet list was presented to the king by Prime Minister Abdul Latif Filali, a 67-year-old liberal reappointed on Jan. 31. Mr. Filali has headed a cabinet of technocrats since November 1994.

More than half the ministers in the cabinet are newcomers.

As expected, there were few changes in the top cabinet jobs. Mr. Filali retained the foreign ministry portfolio while Driss Bassi, the powerful interior minister, kept the job he has held for the last 20 years. Mr. Bassi was also information minister in the previous government.

One important development was the separation of the ministries of interior and information, brought under Mr. Bassi in 1985. The move had been criticised as undemocratic by the opposition.

Former Youth and Sports Minister Driss Alaoui M'daghi was appointed to the renamed Ministry of Communications and designated official government spokesman.

Privatisation Minister Abdel Rahman Saadi, a technocrat whose task is to oversee the privatisation of nearly 100 state enterprises before the end of the year, also kept his job.

The most significant change was at the Ministry of Finance, which went to Mohammed Kabbaj.

Mr. Kabbaj, a former minister of public works, becomes minister of finance and foreign investment.

King Hassan on Saturday decorated 17 outgoing ministers, among them former Finance Minister Mourad Cherif, who was appointed head of the strategic state-owned phosphates firm.

Also out was Tourism Minister Serge Berdugo, the

only Jewish cabinet minister. He was replaced by Mohammed Alaoui M'hamed, a leading member of the constitutional union party.

The Ministry of Human Rights went to Mohammed Ziyan, a prominent and outspoken lawyer.

King Hassan asked Mr. Filali, a career diplomat whose son is married to one of the king's daughters, to form a government from the centre-right parliamentary majority after attempts to form a coalition government with the opposition bloc failed.

The king had intended to name a prime minister from one of the four opposition parties and end 30 years of right-wing government but the talks collapsed.

The opposition parties, who have 125 seats in the 333-seat parliament, declined an invitation to form a minority government after elections in June and September 1994, which they said were flawed.

Out of the 35 members of the new government, 20 belong to the right-wing Wifaq group of three parties which belong to the parliamentary majority, the remainder being "technocrats" or independents.

The Constitutional Union has nine ministers, the Popular Movement eight and the National Democratic Party three. Two other right wing parties, the National Rally of Independents and the Popular National Movement, did not want cabinet posts but said they would support the government in parliament.

The king invited Mr. Filali to form a new government of the right on Jan. 31 following the failure of efforts to bring in the opposition to form a left-leaning administration in alternation.

The left-wing Socialist Union of Popular Forces and the nationalist Istiqlal parties refused to serve unless Mr. Bassi was dropped as interior minister, which the king rejected.

U.S. confirms Saudi foreign minister visit

WASHINGTON (R) — Saudi Arabia's foreign minister will visit Washington later this week for talks on the Middle East peace process, maintaining U.N. sanctions on Iraq and other issues, the State Department said on Monday.

Spokeswoman Christine Shelly said she could provide no details about the meetings planned with U.S. officials for Prince Saud Al Faisal.

But undoubtedly he will meet Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who is due to leave Washington on March 7 for a trip to the Middle East and the Gulf. There are also reports from the Gulf that Prince Saud will meet President Bill Clinton. Prince Saud "will talk about the Middle East peace process and certainly also Iraq. I expect that it will be a somewhat broader exchange than that," Ms. Shelly told reporters.

Mr. Christopher is embarking on his latest trip to the Middle East at a time when the peace process is embattled on all sides.

Ms. Shelly said Mr. Christopher traditionally has undertaken such trips believing that "his going out there can help move the process forward."

But she warned that this is "not a process where we expect to see real... watershed kind of results linked to any particular visit."

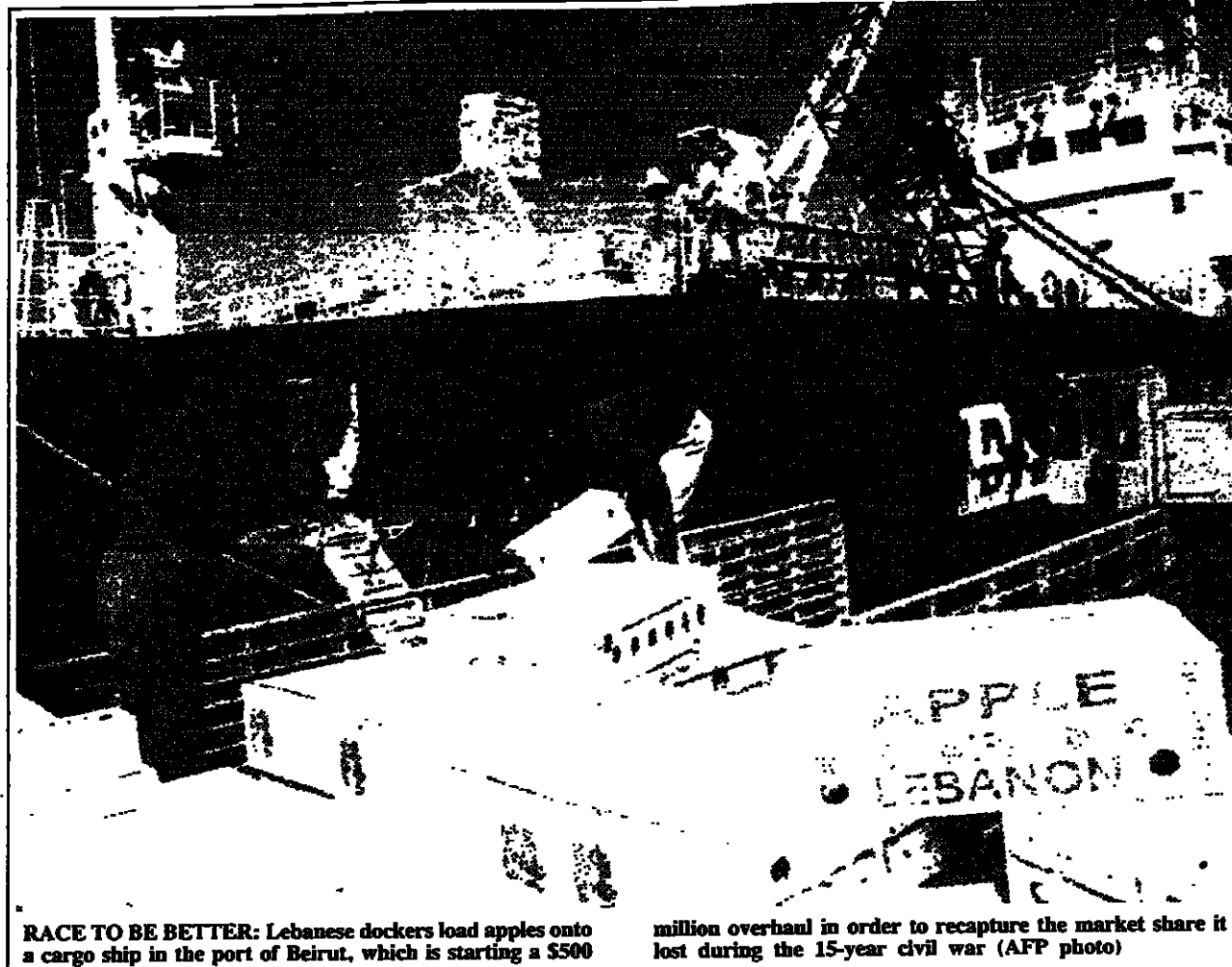
A senior official last month said Mr. Christopher would not undertake another Middle East trip without assurances that his visit could produce tangible progress.

But Ms. Shelly told a news briefing: "I certainly would not characterise this particular trip as a make or break one."

She acknowledged that the United States considers the dispute between Israel and Egypt over the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty an important issue but refused to discuss it in much detail.

"The issue's certainly out there, and it's one I think that the secretary has had several discussions on and certainly will continue to discuss," she said.

"I don't have a specific thing or objective on that issue to signal at this point, but we continue to pursue our objectives on the NPT. That's something which is very strong in the secretary's mind... it's an important issue," she added.



RACE TO BE BETTER: Lebanese dockers load apples onto a cargo ship in the port of Beirut, which is starting a \$500

million overhaul in order to recapture the market share it lost during the 15-year civil war (AFP photo)

Witness retracts statement in Geagea trial

BEIRUT (AFP) — A prosecution witness in the trial of former warlord Samir Geagea on Monday withdrew an earlier statement implicating Mr. Geagea's militia in the murder of rival Christian leader Dany Chamoun in 1990.

Witness Elie Iwaz Irs denied passing on information about the house where Chamoun and his family were killed to the outlawed former Lebanese Forces (LF) militia which Mr. Geagea heads.

Mr. Geagea is charged with the Chamoun family murder and also with the bombing of a church in Beirut in which 11 people died.

Mr. Irs told a special court here that a LF security agent, Khalil Wakim, had pointed the finger at him "under torture," prompting him to confirm Mr. Wakim's statements.

Ten days ago the prosecution's main witness for the church bombing also retracted his earlier statements, claiming they were extracted under torture.

Tufic Hindi, political advisor to Mr. Geagea, told the court Monday that he and Mr. Geagea believed the Chamoun murder may have been carried out by a former LF leader, Elie Hobeika, now a government minister.

Mr. Geagea told an earlier hearing that he was convinced Mr. Hobeika, now minister of state for water and electricity resources, was behind the deaths of Chamoun, his wife and two children.

Mr. Hobeika had been the leader of the LF until until Geagea, his right-hand man, led a coup against him in 1986. Afterwards Mr. Hobeika became a staunch supporter of Syria, the main power-broker in Lebanon.

The trial, which opened in November, is being heard by a special court to which there is no right of appeal.

If found guilty in either case, Mr. Geagea could face the death penalty.

Assad says Syria will never abandon its rights

DAMASCUS (R) — President Hafez Al Assad, in tough remarks ahead of a new U.S. peace initiative in the Middle East, has said Syria would not accept any deal which buries its rights and dignity.

"No one on earth could drag Syria to do what it does not want. Political work should not lead to any abandonment of rights and dignity... we will not accept any solution which does not meet our needs and does not preserve our dignity," Mr. Assad said at a banquet Monday.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher will visit Syria and Israel early March as part of a regional tour to try break a deadlock in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations which opened in 1991.

The talks are stalled over withdrawal from the Syrian Golan Heights, seized by Israel in 1967, and on security arrangements and the nature of peace.

Addressing Islamic clergy, Mr. Assad said Syria would not give concessions on its rights and would not follow others in handling relations with Israel.

"When people feel danger they unite. They do not capitulate even if they come under direct occupation. They defend themselves with all their means."

"They fight with their flesh, stones and knives..."

Zeroual concludes election meetings

ALGIERS (AFP) — President Liamine Zeroual has completed consultations with political figures on his plan to hold presidential elections before the end of the year, his office said in a statement.

The statement said a majority of the 28 politicians and former politicians who met with Mr. Zeroual had supported the plan, but that several had felt it was necessary to end civil strife first. It said the president would now begin consultations with political parties and non-political organisations.

An estimated 30,000 people have died in violence since the army intervened in January 1992 to cancel the second round of elections that the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

Mr. Zeroual, who has been in power for over a year, issued a memorandum in January setting conditions for a presidential poll, although the FIS and the other main opposition parties have demanded negotiations with Algeria's military-backed government before any vote is held.

Mr. Zeroual's office said his meetings to date had shown "very broad approval for the holding of presidential elections."

But it said some of the politicians he met with believed that "the only way out of the crisis is through dialogue involving all parties, including the 'legitimate leadership' of the dissolved party," the FIS.

they never capitulate to their enemy. Nobody accepts humiliation anybody abandons his tradition, history and values," President Assad said.

Mr. Assad renewed his criticism of Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), without referring to them by name, for signing peace accords with Israel but said Syria would not engage in a conflict with them.

Washington was hoping that contacts between Syrian and Israeli ambassadors to the U.S., suspended since December, would resume after the return of Syria's envoy to Washington earlier this month but Syria refused.

Damascus accused Israel of making "impossible demands" during the December session and said no more talks would be held if the U.S. did not come up with new ideas.

Syrian officials said Israel wanted to preserve some observation posts in Golan to monitor a future peace treaty and that a demilitarised military zone be bigger on the Syrian side.

President Assad said he would not make any concessions on Syria's rights and its dignity.

"You hear me and the people hear what I say and hear my statements. None heard and no one will ever hear that I abandoned a principle of a



Hafez Al Assad

right," Mr. Assad.

"Syria is not a big country in area or in population, we might not possess the wealth which others have but we possess belief in God and belief in the nation. Those who believe in God like me will certainly win because they are right," he said.

Mr. Assad said he regretted the collapse of Arab coordination at the peace talks with Israel when the PLO and Jordan signed their peace accords.

"We do not want to enter a conflict with those who made separate deals because the enemy wants us to fight each other. When we fight each other the catastrophe occurs."

The Syrian president praised cooperation between Syria and Egypt and said "whenever Syria and Egypt cooperate they make big accomplishments to their Arab and Islamic nation."

French diplomat heads for Baghdad office

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — France, which is following an independent policy in relations with Iraq and is trying to ease the international sanctions against that country, sent a senior diplomat to Baghdad on Tuesday to operate an interests section in the Iraqi capital.

Iraqi diplomatic sources said Jean-Francois Nodinet, who once served at the French embassy in the Iraqi capital, left for Baghdad early Tuesday.

Mr. Nodinet, who has also served in Yemen and several other countries as France's ambassador, will operate out of the Romanian embassy in Baghdad.

France is the first Western permanent member of the United Nations Security Council to set up a diplomatic presence in Baghdad after the Gulf crisis, when the Iraqi government broke relations with nearly a dozen Western and Arab countries in protest against their military move to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Iraq and France agreed to open the interest section during a meeting held between Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe in Paris in early January.

The French decision to return a diplomat to Baghdad was widely seen as a move to ensure that French commercial interests are protected in the international race to seek business with Iraq.

Dozens of countries have sent official and unofficial delegations to Iraq in recent

months to discuss what are described as "post-sanctions" business.

Iraqi imports amounted to more than \$14 billion in 1989, the first full year of business before the Gulf crisis erupted with its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Businessmen expect massive orders from Iraq once the sanctions are eased/lifted, but another school of thought believes that the country would not have much revenue to pay for them since 30 per cent of all its oil revenues would be channelled to a war reparations fund.

The latest Western delegations to visit Iraq were businessmen from Britain, France and Spain. The outcome of their discussions is kept highly confidential, but it is believed that many of the delegations have signed contracts, most of which are expected to take effect when the sanctions are lifted.

The Iraqi government strategy is based on a blunt statement that it would give preferential treatment in post-sanctions business to countries which support Baghdad's ongoing campaign for an easing/lifting of the crippling embargo.

In Jakarta, Indonesia, on Tuesday, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saad Sahaf said his country "hopes" for an early lifting of the sanctions.

Mr. Sahaf met with President Suharto, whose country is a temporary member of the Security Council, but no details of the talks were available, news agencies reported from Jakarta.

The Iraqi minister is also due to visit China.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Arab League deficit rises to \$100 million

CAIRO (AFP) — The accumulated deficit of the Arab League which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year has risen to \$100 million, a league report said Monday. The cash shortage is due to non-payment of contributions by its 22 members, the league's financial and administrative committee said in the report. The Cairo-based league's draft budget for 1995 has been fixed at \$27 million, according to the committee which opened a meeting in the Egyptian capital on Saturday. Last year the pan-Arab organisation had to borrow \$4.7 million from its employees' pension fund to make ends meet. Furthermore, league members have only paid up \$20 million out of the \$27.5 million envisaged by the 1994 budget, an official said. The Arab League was set up by seven countries in 1945. Foreign ministers from the 21 members states and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) are to discuss the financial report at a meeting in Cairo on March 22.

Egypt plans weekly circumcision day

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian Health Ministry is to devote one day a week to circumcising young girls in government hospitals in a bid to improve hygiene standards for the operation, officials said Monday. "This measure is temporary and is aimed at protecting young girls," Health Minister Ali Abdul Fatah told a press conference. "It will be accompanied by an information campaign before the introduction of a law banning this practice," he said after a meeting with non-governmental organisations. Nearly 3,600 girls undergo circumcision, the removal of all or part of the clitoris, every day in Egypt, according to the Egyptian Human Rights Organisation. "This custom of female genital surgery goes back thousands of years and therefore needs several years for people to be convinced of its dangers and the need to end the practice," the health minister said. Egyptian law allows circumcision as long as it is carried out by doctors in a hospital. However, in most cases girls are circumcised by barbers in risky conditions.

Ultra-orthodox Jews protest Jaffa construction

TEL AVIV (AP) — About 2,000 ultra-orthodox demonstrators on Monday protested construction of a parking lot and housing complex on what they claimed was an ancient Jewish burial ground, throwing bottles and rocks at police. The demonstrators shouted "thieves Nazis" at construction workers clearing the site, surrounded by a cordon of several hundred police, in the Jaffa quarter of Tel Aviv. Some of the policemen rode horses. Thirty demonstrators were arrested and 10 policemen were lightly wounded, police said. One policeman was hospitalised after his hand was bitten. "No violence against these police is enough. We must do something to shock the nation," said protester Yaacov Fried, a 40-year-old Jewish seminary student. "All the buildings they build here will collapse," he added.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:00 "Les Raisons Laveurs"
17:30 Envoye Special "Magazine"
18:00 News in French
19:15 E=M6
19:30 Ramadan in the World
19:45 Get to Know Your Body
20:00 Charlie Chaplin
20:30 Law and Order
21:30 Charlie Chaplin
22:00 News in English
22:20 Snowy River

PRAYER TIMES

06:43 Fajr
07:07 Sunrise
11:48 Dhuhr
15:04 Asr
17:36 Maghreb
18:53 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swellah, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 627795
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 627440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrace Church Tel. 623636
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 60851, Tel. 625543

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 625226

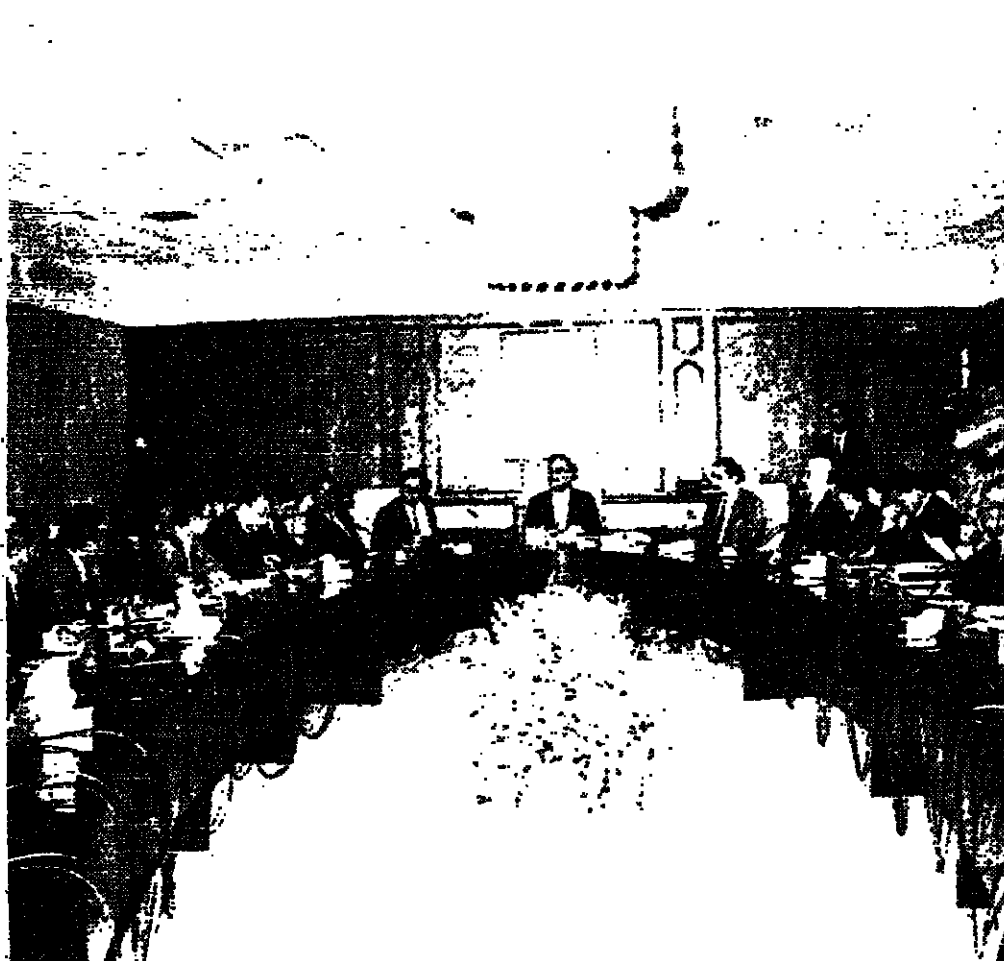
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624358

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684193

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 650932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Tuesday chairs a meeting of the preparatory committee for the Amman economic summit (Petra photo)

Crown Prince reviews preparations for Amman economic summit

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Tuesday reviewed the importance of restructuring Jordanian economic institutions in a manner that would help them face the requirements of the coming stage.

The Crown Prince was speaking at a meeting held at the Prime Ministry to review preparations for the Amman economic summit which is scheduled for October this year.

Prince Hassan stressed the need for the Amman economic summit to adopt a strategy which, among other things, should aim at rehabilitating the economies of the Middle Eastern and North African countries within the framework of non-regional concepts of economic integration.

The Crown Prince also underlined the need for workshops in preparation for the Amman summit to address political, economic and procedural aspects, noting that these workshops should be able to crystallise Jordan's position with regard to the subjects and the projects to be submitted to the summit.

Prince Hassan listened to a detailed briefing by Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb on the preparations for the summit meeting.

Mr. Abul Ragheb, who chairs the preparatory committee for the summit, also shed light on the objectives of the coming meeting and measures to be taken to ensure the maximum benefits for the Kingdom.

Procedural and other issues related to the conference were reviewed at the meeting at which Prince Hassan expressed satisfaction and stressed that funds would be made available for the coming meeting to enable it to achieve success.

Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qasem, Deputy Premier and Minister of Education Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, Deputy Premier and Minister of Information Khaled Karaki, Finance Minister Basel Jaraneh, Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf Humeidi and other senior officials and representatives of the private sector were present at the meeting.

Jordan to observe anniversary of Arabisation of armed forces

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan today observes the 39th anniversary of the Arabisation of the Jordanian Armed Forces upon directives from His Majesty King Hussein.

On the occasion, King Hussein Tuesday received letters of good wishes from Armed Forces Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Abdul Hafez Mar'at Al Kaabneh and Director of the Public Security Department (PSD) Lieutenant General Abdul Rahman Adwan.

The two voiced allegiance to the King and lauded his historic decision to Arabise the army.

"Your Arab army prides itself in the high level it attained in terms of organisation and training thanks to your direct care and concern to develop it and supply it with the latest military equipment to enable it to remain the shield of the homeland and the protector of its security and stability," Gen. Kaabneh said in his cable.

On the first of March 1956 the King ordered the termination of the services of General John B. Glubb as chief of staff of the armed forces and said that Jordanian officers should take up the command of the Kingdom's military.

The move was significant in view of the Arab-Israeli conflict at the time and the dangers that Israel's occupation of Palestine posed to the Arab nation.

It also came as a manifestation of Jordan's desire to rid itself of foreign domination.

A source of pride to the Kingdom, the anniversary reflects King Hussein's wisdom, courageous leadership and great love for his country, people and army.

Since 1956 the King has continually worked towards strengthening the armed forces and has made all efforts to ensure that they are provided with the most up-to-date weapons required to defend the homeland.

General assembly decides to liquidate Dar Al Shaab

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The general assembly of Dar Al Shaab Company, owner of the defunct Sawt Al Shaab Arabic daily, Tuesday opted for the voluntary liquidation of the company while continuing operations of the firm's commercial sector.

Despite protests during the meeting from private sector shareholders, who own only 33 per cent of the company's capital, the majority voted on its liquidation and on the designation of Ma'moun Farouq and Salim Zou'bi as its liquidators.

The assembly also voted to sell the company at auction on condition that it would not be purchased for less than the current value of the company's assets.

The committee chairing the meeting, was appointed two weeks ago by Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb to replace the former board of directors.

It has a one-year mandate to continue operations of the commercial sector of the company, especially the publication of the telephone directory, in addition to overseeing the eventual liquidation process.

"The liquidators should abide by the contract's conditions between Dar Al Shaab and the Jordanian Investment Corporation concerning the telephone directory," said Wasef Azar, the committee's chairman. "We also seek to preserve the rights of the employees."

Mr. Azar, general manager of the Business Bank, said the company's losses have reached more than JD4 million. He said the liquidation should be done as soon as possible since the employees' fate is at stake.

"We don't underestimate the efforts exerted by the former board of directors in doing its job," said Mr. Azar. "But we can't afford to wait one more hour."

Sultan Hattab, a columnist at Al Ra'i newspaper, accused the committee of using the employees issue to sell the newspaper at a low cost.

He said that the former board was dissolved on the basis that the newspaper be issued the following day. But it was not, he said.

"What's the use of changing administration then if the newspaper was not published anyway?" Mr. Hattab asked.

Dar Al Shaab Company, which includes 180 employees, lost more than three fourths of its JD2 million capital in the last five years. The daily Sawt Al Shaab, Jordan's fourth national daily with a circulation of less than 20,000, was suspended indefinitely on Feb. 13 because of huge losses and lack of funds to buy newsprint.

During Tuesday's meeting, three members of the private sector, representing the 198 shareholders, criticised the new committee's decisions and said the former board attempted to restructure the company, but that proposal was rejected by the general assembly in a previous meeting in January.

Deputy Toujan Faisal, who raised the issue of the newspaper in Parliament two weeks ago, accused the government of a conspiracy. The deputy said the government is planning to liquidate the company through legal means and to sell its assets to a certain group called Al Nahda through auction at a price not exceeding JD600,000.

"We don't know who is going to buy it and how, but we insist that the purchase be institutionalised," said Mr. Azar. "The paper will not be sold for JD600,000," he added. "A new 3-member committee will be appointed to evaluate the company's assets and to sell it to the highest bidder in accordance with the price set by the committee."

Abdul Meguid says visit was constructive

AMMAN (Petra) — Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid Monday wound up a three-day visit to Jordan by describing his talks with His Majesty King Hussein and officials as important and constructive and coming at the right moment when the Arab World was preparing to mark the Arab League's 50th anniversary.

Speaking before his departure Dr. Abdul Meguid said that his discussions here aimed at unifying Arab countries' stands with regard to the peace process, adding that the process was paramount to the Arab World and should continue despite the obstacle that Israel might lay in its path.

He expressed appreciation of Jordan's continued support for the Arab League and its various agencies.

Earlier in the day, the speakers of the upper and lower houses of Parliament urged the visiting secretary general to act promptly to revive the Arab summit meetings and promote the role of Arab parliaments in tackling issues facing the nation at the regional and international levels.

Dr. Abdul Meguid discussed pan-Arab affairs and the role of parliaments during his visit to the two chambers accompanied by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.

"I hope that the Arab League would take the initiative towards reviving the Arab summit institution as soon as possible because the Arab countries are currently facing the peace era and are in need of joint and integrated efforts at all levels," said Mr. Lawzi after the meeting.

He said that the Arab League should shoulder its serious responsibility at the present stage which is witnessing efforts towards ending the Arab-Israeli dispute and the advent of a just and comprehensive peace for the Arab region.

The Arab League should assume a significant role in backing collective Arab action towards restoring solidarity among Arab states in the wake of the Gulf crisis which soured Arab relations, added Mr. Lawzi.

For his part, Mr. Srour said that he urged Dr. Abdul Meguid to call on Arab parliaments to forge a formula on coordination and cooperation during their next Arab parliamentary union meeting and also to unify their stand vis-a-vis Arab causes at the inter-parliamentary union meeting due later this year in Madrid.

Mr. Srour briefed the Arab League chief on the democratic process and parliamentary life in Jordan as well as Jordan's continued efforts to end inter-Arab differences.



Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid Tuesday is accompanied by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti prior to his departure from Amman (Petra photo)

Foreign Ministry team returns from Gaza

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Jordanian Foreign Ministry delegation returned home on Tuesday after a three-day visit to the autonomous Gaza Strip where it was received by Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat.

The three-member team, headed by senior Foreign Ministry official Ahmad Hassanat, did not immediately locate premises where Jordan would open a representative office, officials said. This was expected to be done when Jordan formally names an official to head the office.

However, the Palestine National Authority (PNA), headed by Mr. Arafat, viewed the visit of the Jordanian Foreign Ministry team as a token of Jordan's acceptance of Palestinian sovereignty, according to Palestinian observers.

"The PNA is looking for the smallest signs of Arab and Western acceptance of Palestinian sovereignty, and the Jordanian delegation's visit was seen against this background in the Gaza Strip," said an observer.

The representative office will also serve the purpose of coordinating Jordanian-Palestinian relations in trade and other areas of cooperation, the observer noted. Jordan and the PNA have signed a series of agreements on cooperation in various fields and are negotiating others.

The formal opening of the representative office in Gaza is expected in March when Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti will visit the autonomous area, the officials said.

Jordan will be the third country to open such an office in Gaza Strip. Egypt and Morocco have already opened offices, and Tunisia has announced its intention to follow suit.

Mr. Arafat held talks with the delegation for nearly an hour, offering full protocol to their status as diplomatic visitors, and reviewed the general progress of Palestinian autonomy and the status of the economy of the territory, according to Palestinian sources.

Also meeting the delegation was Nabil Shaath, minister of planning and international cooperation in the PNA cabinet. Dr. Shaath is widely seen as gradually taking over the functions performed by Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the political department of the PLO, who is a critic of the autonomy deal that the PLO signed with Israel in 1993 and which paved the way for Palestinian self-rule to take effect in the Gaza Strip and Jericho in May.

Reports from the Gaza Strip said Dr. Shaath was expected in Amman on March 6, but it was not immediately clear whether the visit was for the purpose of attending a meeting along with the foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt and Israel.

Local reports said early this week that the ministerial-level meeting, which will discuss the repatriation of displaced Palestinians, was set for March 6 after a postponement from Feb. 26.

No immediate Jordanian confirmation was available on the reported date.

It was also not clear whether the PLO was designating Dr. Shaath to the meeting and when it takes place. Observers noted that Dr. Shaath had represented the Palestinians in a meeting with the Egyptian, Jordanian and Israeli foreign ministers which was also attended by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Meanwhile, Mr. Kaddoumi, who was in Baghdad over the weekend, passed through Amman on his way to Damascus early Tuesday. Palestinian sources said. The head of the PLO political department and effectively the foreign minister of the Palestinians, did not have any official talks while in Amman, they said.

HUDD to improve services in underprivileged areas

AMMAN (Petra) — The Housing and Urban Development Department (HUDD) this year plans to improve services in poor districts in Amman and Zarqa in cooperation with the two cities' municipalities, according to HUDD Director General Youssef Hiyasat.

The improvements are part of a five-year plan which also entails expansion of existing HUDD projects by at least 471 units in Sahab, Ajloun, Jerash, Ramtha and Aqaba at a cost of nearly JD 19 million, said Mr. Hiyasat.

Furthermore, he said, the department will implement 21 new housing projects in various governorates during the five-year plan at a total cost of JD 36 million. The projects entail building the infrastructure required to serve housing units to be set up by HUDD.

Since its establishment, HUDD has built 35,000 housing units at a total cost of JD 300 million which benefited 225,000 people — all of them coming from limited-income groups, said Mr. Hiyasat.

Referring to HUDD's projects in 1994, Mr. Hiyasat said that these were carried out in five regions including Amman at a total cost of JD 7 million in addition to social services and infrastructure facilities which cost JD 4 million.

With regard to cooperation with other institutions, Mr. Hiyasat said this year HUDD is building 250 housing units for the employees of the Jordan Electricity Authority in Aqaba and another project of 150 housing units for the Armed Forces.

Minister discusses plans for patient register with American team

AMMAN (J.T.) — A two-member team from the University of Maryland in the U.S. are due here on Saturday at the invitation of Health Minister Aref Batayneh to help the health authorities start a national register for cancer patients in the Kingdom.

A statement from the health ministry Tuesday said that the team will spend a week in the country visiting various health institutions, the Royal Medical Services, and universities as well as Al Amal Cancer Centre which is due to begin operations in four months.

The statement said that the team members will discuss and try to familiarise themselves with the cancer situation in the country and help introduce a programme for registering patients and dealing with cancer cases at the national level.

Meanwhile, Tuesday Dr. Batayneh received in his office French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajolet and discussed French-Jordanian cooperation in health-related fields.

They also reviewed the prospect of dispatching a number of health ministry officials and doctors to train in France and technicians to acquire training in the maintenance of medical equipment.

Dr. Batayneh contacted his French counterpart in the presence of Mr. Bajolet to reassure her on the condition of Gilles Hein, the French diplomat who survived a shooting incident while on a visit to Wadi Mujib in the south of Jordan last Friday. Mr. Hein was reported by the French embassy Monday to be recuperating in hospital.

Jordanians in Kuwait jail on strike — relatives

AMMAN (R) — Jordanians serving long jail terms in Kuwait on charges of aiding Iraq's occupation have been on hunger strike for two weeks demanding their freedom, relatives said on Tuesday.

Relatives of more than 10 Jordanian and Palestinian prisoners told Reuters they had information from the emirate that "political prisoners" jailed on charges of collaboration with Iraq have been on hunger strike since Feb. 1.

"They are demanding their official recognition as political detainees and their immediate release," said a brother of two Jordanians jailed in Kuwait's central prison.

Relatives asked not to be identified, saying the release of names could jeopardise those in jail.

Most of Kuwait's pre-war Jordanian community, largely of Palestinian origin, were forced to leave the emirate after the war because of strained relations with Kuwaitis.

There are scores of Jordanians serving sentences in Kuwait on charges of aiding the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait from Aug. 1990 to Feb. 1991.

Ties between Jordan and Kuwait also remain troubled over Amman's sympathy for Iraq during its seven-month occupation and the Gulf war that ended it.

A group in Amman representing jailed relatives asked visiting Arab League Chief Esmat Abdul Meguid on Monday for help in gaining their release.

Their letter sought his intervention to "end the suffering of their brethren detained for more than four years in Kuwaiti jails and put pressure on the Kuwaiti government to release them without delay."

They also appealed to Jordan's prime minister to "intervene with other friendly countries to save our sons' lives."

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Premier forms panel to draft cooperatives law

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Tuesday announced the formation of a committee to work out a draft law on the Federation of Jordanian Cooperative Societies. The committee comprises the ministers of Agriculture, Justice, Culture, Administrative Development and Social Development. A statement from the prime minister's office said that the committee will also come up with a plan to ensure the rights of the Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO) who will be re-employed by the new federation following the dissolution of the JCO.

King Hussein Bridge open during Eid

AMMAN (Petra) — The King Hussein Bridge will remain open during Eid Al Fitr, and travellers to and from the West Bank can cross from 8:00 until 8:00 p.m. except Friday when the bridge will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., according to Colonel Fakhri Daoud, director of the bridges police department. He said that the bridge will remain closed on Saturday.

Weather bureau predicts rise then drop in temperatures

AMMAN (Petra) — The Weather Bureau Tuesday said that Jordan will experience a rise in temperatures Wednesday and unstable weather conditions Thursday when temperatures will drop and scattered showers are expected in the late afternoon.

Chamber to open industrial fair

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman Chamber of Industry Tuesday announced that it would organise a comprehensive industrial fair in Amman on the country's independence anniversary on May 25. A chamber statement said that 120 industrial institutions will display samples of their products to introduce visitors to the industrial development in Jordan. Chamber President Khalidoun Abu Hassan said he sent invitations to various Arab chambers of commerce and industry to visit the fair.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

PLAY

★ Play (in Arabic) entitled "The Mask" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

FILM

★ Film entitled "The Secret Garden" at the British Council at 7:00 p.m.

EXHIBITION

★ "Young America" exhibit (with photographs featuring Americans of all ages) at the American Centre.

Japan's main opposition announces end to quake truce

TOKYO (R) — Japan's main opposition party Tuesday ended loose cooperation with the government over the Kobe earthquake and launched an all-out attack on Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama for his handling of a credit union scandal.

The executive board of the New Frontier Party (NFP) unanimously agreed to oppose government plans to rescue two debt-ridden credit firms, Tokyo Kyowa Credit Association and Anzen Credit Bank, a senior party official said.

"The Executive Council agreed that there is something very contrived and unnatural about the whole rescue package," the senior NFP official said.

The affair involves a Bank of Japan (BOJ)-led scheme to bail out the two credit firms at the expense of taxpayers, BOJ funds and the country's big commercial banks.

The two credit firms hold unrecordable loans totalling some 110 billion yen (\$1.1 billion).

The affairs have raised questions about links between politicians and bureaucrats of the Finance Ministry and officials of the Bank of Japan.

"It is unclear how, when and where this bailout scheme was decided on. It is also unclear under what sort of basis such a scheme will be applied," if other financial institutions were to go bankrupt in the future, the NFP official said.

On March 9, the two businessmen at the heart of the scandal, Harunori Takahashi, former head of Tokyo Kyowa Credit, and Shinsuke Suzuki, former president of Anzen Credit, will appear in parliament to testify under oath.

The central bank has said the two firms lent some 65 billion yen (\$650 million) to companies related to Takahashi's own firm, land developer Eic International Corp.

The affair had already cast shadows on Tokyo Stock Exchange when the collapse of Britain's merchant bank Barings triggered a huge share price plunge.

Led by ex-Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, the NFP had refrained from all-out attacks on Mr. Murayama in a bid to ensure earthquake reconstruction measures went

smoothly.

The first earthquake-relief budget, accounting for some one trillion yen (\$10 billion) for funds to clear rubble and erect temporary homes, was enacted Tuesday after the upper house of parliament passed a supplementary budget bill.

With the budget in place, Mr. Murayama faces tough questioning over a number of issues including the credit union scandal.

The prime minister has already come under criticism for not responding quickly to contain earthquake damage and for failing to deliver on promises to slash government-run corporations.

The bruising parliamentary questioning will set the scene for several election battles this year.

Two rounds of local elections will be held in April, followed by nationwide upper house polls in July.

The first test of the \$1.6 billion credit firm rescue package will come Thursday when a key committee of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly questioning will set the scene for several election battles this year.

government had promised to provide \$300 million, or about a fifth of the total bailout package. The rest would be from the Bank of Japan and commercial banks.

A Socialist Party assemblyman said he doubted whether the committee would approve the bill, since the rescue package has become increasingly unpopular with Tokyo taxpayers. Elections for the 125-member Tokyo Assembly and the governor are to be held in April, part of the nationwide local polls.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said Tuesday he would not be carrying out a cabinet reshuffle in the immediate future.

He told journalists "I am not considering such an idea. The only thing I must do now is put all my energy into helping pass the budget programme and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the (Kobe earthquake) disaster-hit areas."

The Socialist premier's government, formed in June 1994, has been severely criticised for its slow reaction to the Jan. 17 earthquake which killed more than 5,400 people.



Peter Kerry, the 14-year-old who ran away from home with his father's passport and credit cards, is reunited with his parents at London's Heathrow Airport at a press conference. Kerry was picked up in Malaysia near the Thai border (AFP photo)

Runaway schoolboy: Malaysia was 'nice'

LONDON (AFP) — Runaway British schoolboy Peter Kerry arrived home from Malaysia Tuesday saying the unauthorised escapade he took on his father's passport and credit cards was fun, but that he would not go travelling again — for awhile.

Disembarking a flight from Kuala Lumpur wearing dusty cotton travelling clothes and a baseball cap, the 14-year-old whose week-long junkie dominated newspaper headlines here for days said his ambition was to be an airline pilot.

Peter, who previously had run away to Paris and Edinburgh, said, "I have wanted to go to Malaysia for quite a while. It's a nice country. I was interested to see what it would be like."

"It's quite a modern country. Kuala Lumpur is a nice city. It's got lots of big buildings and some skyscrapers. But there are parts which are very undeveloped — shacks and very dirty places as well."

Peter hitchhiked hundreds of miles in Malaysia to the northernmost reaches near the Thai border.

The worst part of his trip, he said, was when the Puteri Pan Pacific Hotel, in Johore Bahru, refused to accept his father's credit card.

"They chucked me out of the hotel and I thought I might be chucked in jail," he said.

Malaysian officials said Tuesday a "genuine" minister by a Malaysian immigration officer allowed a 14-year-old British runaway to slip into Kuala Lumpur with his 59-year-old father's passport.

Peter showed the passport of his father, John Kerry, to an officer at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and was waved through because the document looked valid, officials said.

"There appeared to be a valid amendment to the passport's date of birth, showing the bearer to be a 14-year-old boy born on July 18, 1980,"

quoted as telling Britain's Sky Television, adding: "If my 14-year-old son can leave the country with a false passport, what about terrorists?"

Aris said the Malaysian immigration officer thought the boy resembled the picture in the passport.

"A passport is not usually a perfect match as faces do change sometimes, especially children's," said Aris.

He said the boy also wrote in his embarkation card he would be staying with friends in Kuala Lumpur's financial district.

The boy travelled from Kuala Lumpur to southern Johore state, on to eastern Kelantan state, where he was spotted Sunday.



Peter Kerry is escorted by a policeman as he returns to London at Heathrow Airport (AFP photo)

Voters elect 161 of 181 deputies in Tajikistan parliamentary elections

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan (AP) — Voters elected 161 deputies to government-run parliament in Tajikistan's new parliament in the nation's first legislative elections since 1991, according to preliminary results released Monday.

Nearly all of the 161 deputies were from the old power structures, many of whom ran unopposed because of a boycott by opposition parties, said the ITAR-TASS news agency.

Turnout in Sunday's elections reached 85 per cent despite the boycott, election officials said. A turnout of over 50 per cent among Tajikistan's 2.7 million registered voters was required to make the elections valid.

Final results will be announced on March 1. The balloting filled enough seats in the new, 181-member parliament to allow it to begin regular work. A second round of elections will be held in the districts where no candidate received sufficient votes.

Election officials said that none of the 27 international observers — mostly from other former Soviet republics — "noticed any serious violations in the voting," the Interfax News Agency reported.

The European Union had refused to send its observers, saying it appeared the voting would not be fair.

The Human Rights Watch-Helsinki Group had also expressed doubts about the elections because of a severely censored press and restrictions on civil and political rights.

Opposition parties in poverty-stricken Tajikistan, both the moderates inside and the militants outside the country, boycotted the balloting.

The ruling Kuumintang has only agreed to compensation of \$6 million for each family. Observers said the monument and the apology could help improve government relations with the public, but the compensation and a disagreement between the authorities and the relatives over the inscription on the monument will cause further problems.

The relatives want the government to record the massacre, but the authorities want a more reserved wording. There was no inscription on the monument for the unveiling.

The massacre came as Taiwan was emerging from 50 years of Japanese occupation up to 1945 and there were tensions among native Taiwanese then ruled from the Chinese mainland.

The Nationalist government's mishandling of the case quickly led to mass protests and strikes. Angry protesters stormed government offices and the government replied by sending in troops.

Kiss costs army intelligence chief his job

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) was removed from the sensitive post following a complaint that he tried to kiss a woman chauffeur during a visit to the United States, officials said Tuesday. Brigadier Chula Senewirane is alleged to have made advances towards the woman driver during his three-day visit to the United States to attend a seminar on military affairs, officials said. They said Brig. Senewirane, who was the intelligence chief for more than a year, has now been relieved of his post and transferred to the army command at southern Ratnapura district. He was replaced by Brigadier Shantha Kotagoda, who is security forces commander for northwestern Mannar region, officials said.

Drug abuse hits Chinese primary schools

BEIJING (AFP) — The authorities in southern China have warned that the drugs problems in the region is so serious that secondary and even primary schoolchildren are falling victim to pushers, a report said Tuesday. The warning came as the Kunming Intermediate Court in southern Yunnan province sentenced to death 26 drug traffickers, all of whom were executed immediately.

According to Chen Shaoji, director of Guangdong's Public Security Department, the growth in drug trafficking in the southern province has given rise to cases of abuse among schoolchildren right down to primary level.

Man gets 6 months for trying to steal chicken

MILAN, Italy (AFP) — A homeless Tunisian man caught trying to steal a chicken from a farm was sentenced to six months in jail, officials said Monday. The 38-year-old man was caught red-handed by the farmer, whom he hit in the head before trying unsuccessfully to flee.

The incident occurred in a town near Milan. The man was also fined the equivalent of \$250, the officials said.

Danish police seeking dog manure assailant

COPENHAGEN (AFP) — Danish police are looking for a man they say has been stopping women on the street to ask the time of day or to borrow a pen and then smearing fresh dog manure on their face, neck or hair. They say the man has struck 25 times over the past month.

"He works fast, and flees either on foot or on a bicycle, before the victims know what has hit them," Deputy Police Commissioner Henrik Rasmussen of the Frederiksberg district of Copenhagen said Monday.

Bureaucrats ask: How deep is the red tape?

WASHINGTON (AP) — At least one federal agency seems to understand how outsiders view Washington. It wants to find out how much red tape it throws at the public. The U.S. National Weather Service surveyed people who use its data and services and asked the following multiple-choice question, with possible answers:

"Overall, how much bureaucratic red tape did you experience in obtaining information services or data products from the National Weather Service?"

...over my head.
...up to my eyebrows.
...up to my knees.
...up to my ankles.
...None.

Romanians get stoned

BUCHAREST (AFP) — Stones have been showering down nightly on several homes in a village in eastern Romania where police patrols have failed to shed light on the enigma, news reports here said Monday. The targeted homes are located in the village of Sarulesti and have been bombed by the mysterious for the past week, the reports said.

"At first, we thought a group of criminals was doing this to divert the attention of police and villagers so that they could rob other homes in the village, but we have found nothing to back this theory," the local police chief said.

Chinese dissident demands reforms

BEIJING (R) — Police briefly detained leading Chinese dissident Wang Dan Tuesday after he sent a letter demanding parliament abolish China's re-education through labour system — his second appeal in two days.

"They (police) spoke to me for about 30 minutes about the petition concerning human rights," Mr. Wang said in a telephone interview shortly after his release.

"Their attitude was okay." Re-education through labour is an administrative detention system that allows police to detain those accused of minor offences for extended periods without trial.

A Justice Ministry official said detention could not exceed three years.

Several Chinese dissidents, long chastened by extended prison terms and intrusive police surveillance, have burst into a rare flurry of activity this week with a series of appeals to parliament demanding human rights and an end to one-party rule.

Mr. Wang and 25 other signatories sent a letter Monday to the Communist Party mouthpiece, the People's Daily, and to the National People's Congress, or parliament, to demand safeguards for basic human rights and protection of justice.

Twenty-two signatories, including Mr. Wang, sent another letter Tuesday to parliament, demanding it abolish the "re-education through labour" detention system.

"They don't want me to do this," Mr. Wang said. "I told the police that we will continue this kind of activity."

"We hope to increase the ordinary people's understanding of what human rights are and how to protect them," said Mr. Wang, jailed for four years after the army crushed pro-democracy demonstrations around Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Toll in Ecuador-Peru war higher than announced — rights group

MONTEVIDEO (AFP) — The casualty toll in a four-week struggle between Peru and Ecuador over a patch of remote jungle has left many more troops dead than either government has acknowledged, according to a human rights group.

Ecuador has acknowledged the deaths of 27 troops, 77 injured and 10 disappeared. Peru has announced 38 deaths, 60 injured and 10 missing soldiers.

But the actual toll is much higher, the Uruguay-based Latin American Association of Human Rights said Monday citing eyewitnesses and inspection trips by its members as the source of its information.

"In addition, there are corpses that have not been identified and have been abandoned in the jungle," the group said in a statement signed by its Secretary Juan

De Dios Parra.

"There are a number of soldiers who have not been reported as casualties, especially commando patrols, which allows for an estimation of military loss on both sides at about 500, including dead, wounded and missing," the group said.

Border towns were destroyed in the fighting and thousands of refugees, many of them Indians, have been forced from their homes. Lost crops and other economic losses could total \$30 million daily.

"More than 50,000 people, most of them indigenous from the Amazon and poor residents of border towns have been affected by the war on both sides of the border and been evacuated or otherwise displaced," said the human rights group.

It accused both countries of using civilians to protect

assault forces and to clear landmines and said that Peruvian troops were guilty of "torture, mutilation, castration and the murder of captured Ecuadorian soldiers."

Despite a peace agreement signed on Feb. 17, sporadic clashes have been reported.

Ecuador's top military command reported from Quito Monday that its patrols had clashed with Peruvian troops near Tivintza, an Ecuadorian post that has been a major military target for Peru during the conflict.

Military observers from four nations that guaranteed a 1942 border treaty between the two countries have been dispatched to the Ecuadorian side of the dispute border.

Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States, guarantors of the 1942 Protocol of Rio de Janeiro, also mediated the February pact.

Delays, accusations mar Sri Lankan peace talks

COLOMBO (AP) — It has been six weeks since government negotiators and Tamil rebels held their last round of peace talks, and both sides are criticising each other.

Rebel leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran is warning that further delays could endanger the talks, which began in October after a socialist government was elected to power in Sri Lanka.

"There appears to be a paralysis of will," Mr. Prabhakaran said in a letter Saturday to President Chandrika Kumaratunga. "Further delays can jeopardise the entire peace process."

Although both sides have blamed each other for the deadlock in the talks, a ceasefire announced Jan. 8 has held, despite minor violations. But negotiations are yet to begin discussing political issues such as giving minority Tamils greater autonomy.

Last week, the government opened the only two land routes to rebel-held Jaffna peninsula for the first time in four years as a conciliatory move to guerrillas, who have blamed the government blockade for depriving people of food and power.

"Your government has negotiated our proposal for opening the land routes," and taken a unilateral decision which can only gain propaganda yardage," the Prabhakaran letter said.

"This unilateral decision makes one thing very clear that the government is intent in giving priority not to the needs of the people, but to military subterfuges," he said.

Mrs. Kumaratunga has made speeches accusing rebels of plotting her assassination and of being insincere about a permanent political solution to the 11-year war for an independent Tamil nation. More than 34,000 people have died in the fighting.

Mr. Lee acknowledged the animosity against the authorities caused by the killings on Feb. 28, 1947. The president called for moves to "heal the wounds" between the island's native inhabitants and mainland Chinese who fled here after the civil war.

"As head of state, I take the blame for the error committed by the government and hereby extend my deepest apology" to the families of the victims, he said at the inauguration of a monument to the dead in a Taipei park.

Mr. Lee promised the truth over the massacre would be revealed and called for an end to the hatred between native Taiwanese and Chinese immigrants.

According to a government report, between 18,000 and 28,000 people, including

several hundred mainland immigrants, were killed when Nationalist troops crushed an uprising sparked by a government inspector beating a woman selling untaxed cigarettes. The killings started in Taipei and spread across the island.

The Nationalists fled to Taiwan toward the end of the Chinese Civil War and made it their base after being evicted from the mainland by the Communists in 1949.

"For almost half a century, the historic wounds have cut deep in the hearts of people here," Mr. Lee said, expressing hope the monument helps heal the wounds.

He said the tragedy could have been avoided. "The incident has created a gap between the public and the government, detached public involvement in national development, and hindered social progress," he said.

Mr. Lee said that with the erection of the monument, the people should forgive and remove their hatred.

Lin Tsung-Yi, a representative of the victims' families, accepted Mr. Lee's apology and also called for peace and justice within the island.

Prime Minister Lien Chan and several other government officials as well as representatives of the families unveiled the 100 million Taiwan dollar (\$3.7 million) monument. There is a bell tower, a fountain and a stone structure resembling a person clasping his hands in prayer.

Other memorial ceremonies were held across the island for the anniversary. There was a one minute silence in parliament.

MPs from all parties have agreed to make Feb. 28 a memorial day, but they cannot agree on compensation for relatives.

"It is good for Lee to make the apology, but as he has said the government will compensate for the relatives, we are asking for an amount between eight to 12 million Taiwan dollars for the family of each victim," said Yea Chun-Lan, a senior representative of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party.

Maid: Simpson's Bronco was parked outside his home at time of murder

LOS ANGELES (AP) — O.J. Simpson's key witness testified on videotape that she saw his white Ford Bronco parked crookedly outside his estate at the time prosecutors contend he was killing his ex-wife and her male friend.

Rosa Lopez, whose testimony will be played for jurors later in the trial if she leaves the country, said Monday she saw the Bronco on the street just after 10 p.m. on June 12.

Ms. Lopez, a maid for Simpson's next-door neighbour, said in Spanish that she was walking her employers' golden retriever that night. She said she wasn't wearing a watch but had checked a clock just before she left.

"Were you able to see any cars parked out on Rockingham there?" defence attorney Johnnie Cochran Jr. asked.

"Si. Yes," she said. "And what car did you see parked out there?"

"El Bronco," Ms. Lopez said.

Prosecutors claim that Simpson drove the Bronco to Nicole Brown Simpson's home two miles (three kilometres) away, where he allegedly murdered her and friend Ronald Goldman about 10:15.

A former football star and popular television sports commentator, Simpson is perhaps the best-known

American ever charged with murder. He has pleaded innocent.

The housekeeper's appearance kept the reluctant and tearful promise she made Friday to return to court, but she faced a video camera rather than jurors because of a last-minute plea by prosecutors that she not disrupt their case.

Superior Court Judge Lance Ito's decision to tape her testimony which reversed arrangements made Friday, left Mr. Cochran complaining that Judge Ito had been "snookeyed" by prosecutors seeking to keep Ms. Lopez away from the jury.

Complicating matters further, disputes arose over a court translator's ability to interpret Ms. Lopez's Spanish-language testimony and the defence's failure to disclose a second interview it conducted with Ms. Lopez last summer.

After bitter accusations by Deputy District Attorney Marcia Clark and a claim by defence attorney Carl Douglas that the failure was harmless error, the judge delayed ruling on whether the defence should be punished.

The second Lopez statement contained the name of another potential witness, a maid prosecutor said they would have interviewed more thoroughly had they known about her potential involvement.

Ms. Lopez, who Friday

appeared tired, looked refreshed Monday. Friday's warmsuit was replaced by a deep blue dress with a beaded collar, dark stockings and high heels.

Her initial testimony, which went slowly as each question and answer were translated by her new interpreter, focused on her background.

The woman's credibility was significantly damaged Friday when prosecutors caught her in lies concerning her plans to flee to her native El Salvador on a one-way ticket. Prosecutors revealed she had no immediate departure reservations but already had a round-trip ticket, returning to Los Angeles, booked for March.

Meanwhile, the defence released court papers Monday calling on the city to give Ito the results of newly completed Internal Affairs investigations of detective Mark Fuhrman. The defence wants the judge to review the documents in private and determine whether the contents are relevant.

The defence says the investigations involve allegations Mr. Fuhrman planted a glove at the Simpson estate, brought Nazi paraphernalia to work and in the past knew Simpson's ex-wife well enough to comment on her body.

Mr. Fuhrman has not yet testified.

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U.N. reports heavy fighting in Bihac

SARAJEVO (R) — Heavy fighting erupted in the Bosnian enclave of Bihac Tuesday as rebel Muslims launched attacks on Bosnian government troops, United Nations peacekeepers said.

"It started at 8:30 (local) this morning and it's still going on," a Bangladeshi U.N. officer told Reuters by telephone from the enclave. "Intense firing is under way."

The fighting was concentrated south of Velika Kladusa, in the north of the enclave, said the officer from a U.N. base in Corralici.

The main U.N. aid agency said a convoy of nine relief trucks was abandoned by its drivers after running into the exchanges.

U.N. peacekeepers reported mortar, artillery, tank and multiple-barrelled rocket launchers firing south of Velika Kladusa, the officer said. Some 850 detonations had been reported by 3 p.m. local (1400 GMT).

The Bosnian government 5th Corps is battling rebel Muslim forces loyal to local businessman-turned-warlord Filaret Abdic, who opposes the Muslim-led government in Sarajevo. Mr. Abdic's troops are allied with Serb forces in Croatia and Bosnia and the Croatian Serbs have backed his attacks with big guns.

"We gather Abdic forces have launched an attack on BH (Bosnian army) lines and there's still fighting going

on," the Bangladeshi peacekeeper said.

A new year's ceasefire in Bosnia has failed to halt fighting in the Bihac pocket, especially around Kladusa, which rebel Muslims recaptured last year.

Meanwhile, General Bernard Janvier assumed command of the U.N. Protection Force in former Yugoslavia Tuesday facing the prospect of a pullout of his forces from Croatia and a possible conflagration in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Gen. Janvier took over following a military ceremony at UNPROFOR's Zagreb headquarters attended by U.N. special representative Yasushi Akashi, signing a document with his predecessor General Bertrand de Lapresle formalising the hand-over.

He assumes office with only a month of the U.N. mandate in Croatia remaining. President Franjo Tudjman having notified the United Nations that the peacekeepers must begin their pullout by March 31 and complete it within three months.

Western leaders fear that the withdrawal of U.N. forces from Croatia will trigger renewed fighting between the government and separatist Serbs and make the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Bosnia logistically impossible.

Gen. Lapresle said UNPROFOR commanders were determined to carry on their

mission "up to the end of our mandate on March 31 at midnight" and said he believed the peacekeeping force would have "another form of activity from April 1 onwards."

He said he "refused to believe" the UNPROFOR work could be thrown into reverse by Mr. Tudjman's decision, and hinted that talks were currently in progress that would hand a major role to the force's civilian component.

"It would be a real disaster if we really had to implement the withdrawal decision," he said.

Gen. Janvier, 55 and a former officer in the French Foreign Legion, pledged to work for the success of the UNPROFOR mission and expressed admiration for his predecessor.

Previously chief of staff at the French army's Operation Planning Centre at Creil, north of Paris, Gen. Janvier led a French division during the Gulf War in 1991.

International diplomatic initiatives to resolve the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia have proven largely fruitless. Zagreb is demanding that separatist Serbs recognise its sovereignty over the 30 per cent of Croatian territory that they hold, while the Serbs have rejected an autonomy offer and demanded recognition of their independence on their right to join up with Serbs elsewhere in former

Yugoslavia.

Zagreb is the main base for the U.N. operation in ex-Yugoslavia notably for Bosnia, where a four-month truce introduced on Dec. 31 is slowly unravelling and where a fresh outbreak of hostilities is widely expected by spring.

Preparations are well advanced in anticipation of a possible pullout of UNPROFOR from Bosnia.

The U.N. Tuesday played down a dispute with NATO over alleged violations of the U.N. no-fly zone over Bosnia, saying there was "no discrepancy" between U.N. and NATO reports.

General De Lapresle said a joint investigation showed there was no evidence of planes landing or unloading cargo in the mainly-Muslim town of Tuzla in northern Bosnia.

"There had not been clear evidence that any plane either landed in Tuzla or dropped any deliveries," he added.

A U.N. spokesman said at least two aircraft — one cargo-type plane and one fighter-type jet — were seen in the air by a three-man forward air controller team as well as a Norwegian air crew at a U.N. helicopter base near Tuzla.

U.N. spokesman Gary Coward reported that a ground observer with night vision goggles "was able to discern three aircraft circling above Tuzla at height."

Claes to ask U.S., Canada for extra NATO funds

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Willy Claes, NATO's embattled secretary-general, is to travel to the United States and Canada Thursday to try to get both countries to increase financial contributions to the military alliance.

His 10-day trip, looking for extra cash to pay for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO), expansion into Eastern Europe and other new missions, comes as Mr. Claes is embroiled in a corruption inquiry in his home country Belgium.

Dutch Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve called Thursday for Mr. Claes to

stand down from his post temporarily to give him time to clear his name in a row over alleged kickbacks paid in a defence contract signed by the Belgian government when Mr. Claes was an economic minister.

"The longer this affair lasts, the more prejudicial it becomes to NATO," he said. "We can't afford the luxury of having NATO weakened because its chief has got his mind on other things."

Mr. Claes, who was questioned at his own request Monday by Belgian judicial authorities investigating the purchase of Augusta helicop-

ters, has denied any wrongdoing and has been supported by U.S. Vice-President Al Gore.

The NATO chief will move on to the United States after first visiting Canada, where he will meet Prime Minister Jean Chretien and other cabinet ministers.

In Washington he will meet President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Defence Secretary William Perry.

Their discussions will be dominated by the need to find extra money to pay for NATO expansion into Eastern Europe under the Part-

nership for Peace programme, relations with Russia, new priorities in southern Europe, and the situation in former Yugoslavia.

"The alliance doesn't want to take on any new missions without an increase in revenue," said one senior official at its headquarters, who said the programme in Eastern Europe has so far been financed by redeploying money and personnel.

"Technically, this is no longer possible and all the countries of the alliance have to understand that we have reached a threshold," the official said.

Grachev: Russian army must stay at over 1.7 million

MOSCOW (R) — Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev said Tuesday that the number of troops in the country's armed forces must not be allowed to fall below 1.7 million, Interfax News Agency reported.

Gen. Grachev was speaking at a meeting of top Defence Ministry officials in Moscow on the preliminary lessons learned in 11 weeks of conflict in the rebel southern region of Chechnya.

Russia's armed forces now number about two million. Economic reformers in government have spent the last three years trying to cut troop numbers, arguing that the expense of maintaining a large army is not justified now the cold war is over.

Gen. Grachev told the meeting that insufficient financing of the army and the navy was one of the main problems affecting combat readiness. Russia's troops

have been sharply criticised in Chechnya for poor organisation and lack of discipline.

Russia sent troops into Chechnya on Dec. 11 to crush the tiny region's three-year independence bid. They have not yet fully succeeded, although they outnumbered Chechen fighters still resisting are only equipped with light weapons.

Speaking of the lessons

learned as the result of the Chechen operation, Gen. Grachev said the concept for military exercises should be re-examined, to focus on urban fighting and on local rather than international scenarios.

"We don't need the strategic exercises since world war is a long way off. We need to hold exercises to train the armed forces for how to act in local wars," he was quoted as saying.

Former head of Spanish Civil Guard to face charges

MADRID (AFP) — The former head of Spanish Civil Guard was brought back to Madrid Tuesday after 10 months on the run to face corruption charges which have badly shaken the socialist government of Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez.

Gen. Roldan, 51, arrived at the military airport in Madrid early in the morning on a flight from Thailand, with a stopover in Rome, and was to appear later before a judge for arraignment.

Officials said he was arrested by Spanish police in Laos or Thailand.

They would not specify which country for "security reasons" and did not disclose the date of the arrest, which was announced late Monday.

Mr. Roldan has been accused of diverting Interior Ministry funds for his own use while serving as head of the Civil Guard from 1986 to 1993, and of taking bribes during bidding for public con-

tracts.

His wealth during that period allegedly grew by 500 million pesetas (\$3.9 million) but a parliamentary commission suspects he and two other accomplices may have embezzled as much as five billion pesetas (\$39 million).

In a major embarrassment for the government, Mr. Roldan, often mentioned as a likely candidate for interior minister, vanished in April after the judge investigating the case summoned him for questioning and asked that he surrender his passport.

His disappearance triggered a government crisis, with then Interior Minister Antonio Asuncion resigning.

The opposition charged that the government had organised Mr. Roldan's flight to buy his silence, an accusation strongly denied by Mr. Gonzalez, who hailed his arrest in a statement Monday.

Mr. Roldan's arrest "reflects in the clearest manner the government's will not to interfere in judicial matters," the statement said.

The ruling Socialist Party, for its part, blasted the right-wing opposition for acting in "bad faith in spreading the idea that the government was hiding" Mr. Roldan.

Local media reports said Mr. Roldan was found in Laos and arrested there or across the border in Thailand after leading some 150 police officers on a chase across 10 countries, mainly in Africa and South America.

The daily ABC said his whereabouts were leaked to the Spanish police for "economic compensation" by a former associate, Francisco Paesa, an ex-diplomat and arms dealer.

ABC said that Spanish police had tracked Mr. Roldan to Malaysia then to Thailand, where he had reported

ly gone for treatment for a bleeding ulcer. He offered no resistance when arrested, saying only that he did not intend to pay for others.

Mr. Roldan's arrest could shed light on numerous unanswered questions concerning the misused Interior Ministry funds, allegedly used in part to finance anti-terrorist hit squads that killed at least 24 Basque separatist militants between 1983 and 1987.

That scandal threatened to bring down the Gonzalez government earlier this month after the former secretary of state for security, Rafael Vera, was arrested. Mr. Vera had been Mr. Roldan's direct boss.

Mr. Vera has denied allegations that the government paid 200 million pesetas (\$1.5 million) in covert Interior Ministry funds to two jailed former policemen who linked the government to the hit squads, known as GAL.

Vote on Europe will be a cliff-hanger for Major

LONDON (AFP) — Prime Minister John Major faces a tight parliamentary vote on Europe this week, with the Labour opposition banking on Tory Eurosceptics and angry Ulster Unionists to sabotage his fragile majority.

Should the Wednesday night vote on a Labour motion challenging government policy on the European Union go against Mr. Major, it could force a vote of confidence that Mr. Major can ill-afford to risk.

Mr. Major's thin majority in the House of Commons vanished in theory last November when nine of his party's Eurosceptic MPs were cut loose from the party for opposing the government in a vote on Europe.

That tenuous position was exacerbated when nine Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

MPs who had been supporting Mr. Major were enraged by the terms of last Wednesday's Anglo-Irish peace initiative and hinted they might no longer vote with him.

One of them, William Ross, said on the weekend that although no decision had been taken, the UUP would find it "very difficult" to support the government "under the circumstances."

The Labour motion that will be the object of the Wednesday vote, condemning government policy on Europe, seeks to exploit the vexing divisions within Mr. Major's cabinet Europe, particularly the idea of a single European currency.

Mr. Major, already suffering the lowest opinion poll ratings of any British premier in modern history, has tacitly acknowledged the import-

ance of the Wednesday vote by indicating he will lead the floor debate himself.

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said Friday that if the government were defeated in the Labour motion, a vote of confidence would be held.

Mr. Hurd, in a speech Tuesday to the German Society for Foreign Affairs in Berlin, said members of the European Union "must get away from seeing European cooperation as being a choice between a deeply integrated model, based in Brussels, and a competitive power play between nineteenth-century nationalism."

Cooperation realised in the single market and in community institutions "is vital and must be sustained," Mr. Hurd said.

Britain and Germany were

together in conviction on European security, said Mr. Hurd. A German Constitutional Court decision last July freeing the German army to participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations outside NATO boundaries increased the "scope for that country to play a leading role," he said.

But that does not, he stressed, "mean a European army."

"Decisions about military engagement are decisions about the lives of soldiers and citizens," he said. "They can only be taken by sovereign governments. Cooperation must be intergovernmental."

The success of European Union enlargement to include the countries of eastern Europe "depends on us adapting, not just the new members."

Mr. Hurd said.

S. Korean leader to start European tour

Poles leave Korean border under North Korean pressure

PANMUNJOM, Korea (R) — Polish officers policing the fragile truce on the Korean peninsula have left the tense border area after the Communist North threatened to oust them, U.S. and Swedish military officers said Tuesday.

"I understand they are no longer at their camp in the border area," a U.S. military source said.

South Korea and the U.S.-led United Nations have said North Korea's threat to remove a Polish mission from the border was a violation of the armistice which brought the 1950-53 Korean War to an inconclusive halt.

Major General Karl Widen, head of a Swedish delegation to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) overseeing the armistice, said:

"We have not heard from the Polish delegation since yesterday. When we spoke to them, they said they would be leaving this morning."

"We heard that transport came up to collect the Poles and there is now no response to our walkie-talkie calls," Gen. Widen said, adding light trucks had already moved most of their goods out overnight.

North Korea notified the six-man Polish delegation earlier this month that food, water and electricity to their camp, just north of the inter-Korean border near the truce village of Panmunjom, would be cut off at the end of February.

North Korea's move against the Poles is its latest

effort to dismantle the intricate armistice process which has kept an uneasy truce in Korea for more than 40 years.

In 1993 it refused to allow a delegation from the Czech Republic to take over border duties from Czechoslovakia. Since then the Swedes, the Swiss and the Poles have maintained the NNSC presence.

Under the armistice, North Korea itself had selected then-Communist Poland and Czechoslovakia for NNSC duties. The United Nations side chose Switzerland and Sweden.

Last year North Korea withdrew from the Military Armistice Commission, the main body which oversees the truce, and persuaded wartime ally China to withdraw its monitors from the border between the two Koreas.

Warsaw's Foreign Ministry said last Thursday Poland would not withdraw from the NNSC even if they had to quit the camp.

South Korea Tuesday urged the Communist North to stop trying to abrogate an armistice agreement.

North Korea, describing the armistice as a "useless piece of paper," has proposed talks with the United States to replace the pact with a full-scale peace treaty.

"It is a big mistake for the North to think it can set up a peace agreement with the United States while continuing manoeuvres to destroy the armistice agreement and paralyse the armistice bodies," a Foreign Ministry

spokesman said in Seoul.

He said the issue of signing a peace agreement should be settled between the South and North, as agreed between the two sides in a non-aggression pact signed in December 1991.

The pact requires the two states to take a series of tension-reducing steps, but none of them has been implemented because of the row over the North's suspected development of nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile South Korean President Kim Young-Sam begins a tour of six European states this week to seek support for national ambitions ranging from a seat on the U.N. Security Council to staging soccer's 2002 World Cup.

Mr. Kim will also push South Korea's bid to join the Paris-based club of wealthy nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), while the European Union urges Seoul to remove protectionist trade barriers, government officials and diplomats said.

Mr. Kim leaves Seoul Thursday for a two-week tour taking in France, the Czech Republic, Germany, Britain, Denmark and Belgium.

It is his first visit to Europe since taking power in February 1993 as the first South Korean leader in 30 years who was not a former army general.

"We think that the foremost significance is to concentrate and intensify our efforts to establish some sort of substantial meaningful re-

lationship with Europe, not just as an economic partner, as a real dialogue partner," Mr. Kim's press secretary Park Jin told foreign reporters.

He said Mr. Kim would seek support for a non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council in 1996, while members of his delegation lobby for its bid to stage the 2002 World Cup instead of arch-rival Japan, or Mexico.

In Germany, Mr. Park said, Mr. Kim would deliver a policy speech in Berlin on South Korea's position towards unification with North Korea. From which it has been separated since the end of World War II.

He said Seoul hoped Germany would take South Korean concerns into account when deciding whether to improve its diplomatic relations with North Korea, where it maintains a representative office, a legacy of its own post-war division.

Bilateral trade between South Korea and the European Union was worth about \$23.5 billion last year with a \$3.0 billion balance in the EU's favour. The EU accounts for about 13 per cent of Korea's total trade compared with 20 per cent for Japan and 21 per cent for the United States.

"We think the proportion for Europe is relatively low and there is room for a further increase," Mr. Park said.

Germany is South Korea's major trading partner in Europe followed by Britain and France.

U.S. intends to keep 100,000 troops in Asia

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States is determined to keep a 100,000-strong military force in East Asia and the Pacific region, according to the Pentagon's East Asia Strategy Report.

"There will no longer be any drawdown of (U.S.) troops," from East Asia, Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs Joseph Nye said on presenting the report to Congress.

He said the approximate number of 100,000 troops "is roughly the same number of troops that we have forward-positioned in Europe."

Mr. Nye said there would be no reduction in the 37,000 U.S. troops currently stationed in South Korea unless specified in an agreement between Seoul and Pyongyang.

A 1990 U.S.-South Korean agreement to reduce U.S. troops to around 30,000 and later to 23,500 was put on hold in 1991 when North Korea's nuclear programme

was cause of concern.

While acknowledging that China's defence budget has increased 40 per cent over the last five years, Mr. Nye said the Pentagon report "points out that we do not want to see China as an enemy."

He said the next step in Washington's military relationship with China was "a set of visits" and upcoming visits by U.S. warships in Chinese ports.

Mr. Nye also said that "progress in the trade agreement reached this weekend is a useful step" in the U.S.-Chinese military relationship.

He confirmed, however, Washington's intention to equip its forces in East Asia with theatre ballistic missile defences, despite Chinese opposition.

"We believe that TMD are going to be an important part of defences in East Asia in the future," Mr. Nye said, adding that their deployment was not "a hostile act aimed at a particular country."

After abandoning the space-based missile defence system known as Star Wars, the United States chose to maintain its ballistic missile defence systems to protect their troops around the world.

Regarding Japan, Washington's foremost military partner in Asia, Mr. Nye echoed the policy of President Bill Clinton's administration saying, "there is no bilateral relationship, bar none, more important than the U.S. relationship with Japan."

The Japanese government Tuesday said it strongly backed the U.S. commitment to maintain its military force of 100,000 in the east Asia-Pacific region.

"Japan welcomes the views of such a report," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Teruaki Terada of the U.S. Defence Department's East Asia Strategy Report.

Mr. Terada highlighted that the U.S. report "views

the Japan-U.S. security arrangement with importance" and that it "confirms that Japan is a natural partner in the formation of the international order in the post-cold war era."

The Pentagon's list of U.S. military bases to be closed is shorter than it would have been due to pressure to minimise high up-front costs, Defence Secretary William Perry said Monday.

The Clinton administration, making final preparations for issuing the list Tuesday, ran into the iron logic of base closings: The savings come years down the road; in the short term, closing bases costs money.

"It is a heavy price we are paying," Mr. Perry said during a question-and-answer session at an American Legion meeting in Washington Monday. "The good news is that by 1999, we will be saving \$4 billion not only that year but every year thereafter as a result of closures."

Russia says border issue may mar ties with China

MOSCOW (R) — A Russian regional leader's demand that Moscow tear up a border treaty with Beijing could start a new era of confrontation, a Russian official warned as Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev prepared for a visit to China.

"It should be frankly stated that such a threat exists," Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Panov told ITAR-TASS news agency Monday evening in comments before Mr. Kozyrev's two-day visit starting Wednesday.

"Stoking emotions could have a snowball effect and in the end lead to a situation similar to what we had in the 1960s and from which we had been stepping back for 20 years," Mr. Panov said.

Under the border treaty signed in 1991, Moscow surrendered to China some 15 square kilometres of territory.

It was intended to end a dispute under which China had long claimed back three tiny strips of land on the 4,300-kilometre eastern section of the border seized by the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s. Demarcation of the border began in 1993.

But Yevgeny Nazdratenko, governor of the maritime region bordering China, said earlier this month that the border treaty, ratified in 1992, was unjust.

He vowed his administration would formally ask the Russian parliament to denounce the treaty.

Mr. Panov told TASS the Foreign Ministry had done its best to smooth over the negative impact of his campaign.

"At this stage the negative reaction of the Chinese side has been expressed in a number of statements made through diplomatic channels

and at talks," he said.

But Mr. Panov praised Chinese restraint. "Beijing is staying silent so far, avoiding fresh rows with Russia," he said.

Moscow is keen to avoid fresh friction with Beijing because it wants stable relations with its huge neighbour as the health of China's 90-year-old paramount leader Deng Xiaoping declines.

Officials in Smolenskaya Square (the Foreign Ministry) said the last thing Moscow needs is an irritant which might cast a shadow over relations between Russia and China at this sensitive moment," Russian Television said last week.

Mr. Deng and former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev reached a breakthrough in the 1980s, ending a fierce ideological stand-off and easing tensions in the region.

Post-Communist Russia has found in China a huge market for its industries, including arms producers, which have been hard hit by an economic slump at home.

Mr. Kozyrev has vowed that the question of renouncing the treaty will not be raised and that the border demarcation will go ahead according to the pact.

But some political parties inside and outside the Russian parliament may try to use the issue to stir up nationalist feeling before parliamentary elections due in December.

"This (Nazdratenko's campaign) may be just the first negative steps and one can imagine what the result would be if the events develop along the way offered by the administration of the maritime region," Mr. Panov said.

The influential newspaper Izvestia said Tuesday that at the height of confrontation between Russia and China in the late 1960s, Beijing had sought back some 1.5 million square kilometres of Soviet territory.

Dozens of Soviet and Chinese servicemen died in border clashes for the disputed strips of frontier.

Mr. Kozyrev begins a four-day trip to China and Japan Wednesday expected to be overshadowed in Tokyo by the long-running territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands.

Officially, the Russians have said the strip aims at developing relations and strengthening partnership with the two countries.

In Beijing, Mr. Kozyrev will meet President Jiang Zemin, Prime Minister Li Peng and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen.

On the Tokyo leg of the tour beginning Thursday, Mr. Kozyrev is scheduled to hold talks with Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and Foreign Minister Yohei Kono.

"We regard these visits as the continuation of Russian diplomacy in the east," said Mr. Panov Monday, adding that nothing "sensational" was expected from the trip and no major documents were due to be signed.

Mr. Murayama indicated clearly earlier this month that Tokyo would renew its demands for the early return of the four northern Kuril Islands seized by the Soviet Union at the end of World War II.

On the issue of the reported sale of three Russia Kilo-class attack submarines to China, the two sides see

eye to eye.

Mr. Panov insisted Tuesday that military-technical cooperation between Russia and China was no threat to Asian stability.

Quoted by the news agency ITAR-TASS, he said that "no apprehensions have been voiced in the area in question." Referring to U.S. unease at the submarine sale, he added that Washington had also shown "understanding."

Meanwhile, just three days ahead of Mr. Kozyrev's arrival in Tokyo, the foreign minister's book Transfiguration was published here Monday. In it, he warned Japan not to make relations with Russia a hostage to the Kuril Islands dispute.

"To focus only on the state of the South Kurils and move the rest to the background, means to freeze our relations for another 40 years," he said.

Japan has been demanding the return of Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashiri and Etorofu in the strategic Kuril chain just off Hokkaido, saying they were illegally occupied by the Soviet Union in the closing days of World War II.

Because of the dispute, Japan and Russia have yet to sign a peace treaty to formally end hostilities.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said earlier that Mr. Kozyrev would seek a "flexible form" of cooperation with Japan concerning the dispute over the Kuril islands.

In his book, Mr. Kozyrev called for a "security community" in the Asian-Pacific rim in order to avoid "a serious source of conflicts where the strategic interests of such states as Russia, China, the United States and Japan interlink."

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Go for the root cause

THE COUNCIL of Islamic Organisations and Societies in Jordan, on the occasion of the publication of a report by the Vienna-based International Narcotics Control Board on the world drug situation, issued its own prescription for ending the crisis. The concern of the international organisation is of course commendable and shows deep interest in the global drug problem. What we take exception to, though, is some unbalanced points in the 11 proposals of the council, circulated recently to diplomatic missions in Amman.

To begin with, the main thrust of the ideas of the council is punitive in nature, and it does not attempt to view the problem as a socio-economic or psychological one that calls for closer examination and understanding. The drug issue, after all, is not only an evil or a criminal act requiring stiff punishment. It is also a social problem that has its roots in many societal factors. Organised crime exploits these conditions to market their products and make quick profit.

Another obvious example of the shortcomings of the council's submissions is its call for conducting medical tests on select groups of people, such as vehicle drivers, university students and job applicants. This is an arbitrary selection of categories of people that may not correspond with the reality of the situation. If medical tests must be conducted to check the tide of the drug problem, then why not test everybody including professors, officials and professionals. Screening people who are most vulnerable to drug abuse may prove to be effective, but it cannot be done on a "discriminatory basis. And testing every...ly is neither cost effective nor workable.

We certainly believe in the necessity for combating drug abuse, but we also believe that the most effective way to attain this objective is to apply a multifaceted approach that would include prevention, treatment and a punishment that is reasonable.

It must be recognised that international drug trafficking is a complex matter in which organised crime plays a central role. Unless the main causes are identified and principle culprits are reached and dealt with at the source level, all other efforts will prove to be futile as, indeed, has been demonstrated in the past.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

BY WELCOMING the Arab League Secretary General Iqbal Abdul Meguid in Amman, Jordan is reaffirming its firm policy of supporting the Arab League and its various agencies because they can stimulate collective Arab action vis-a-vis regional and international issues, said Al Ro'i daily Tuesday. It said that it has always been Jordan's policy to see the Arab League handling various Arab issues and containing regional disputes to prevent any foreign intervention in Arab affairs. The paper said that Jordan is voicing full backing to Dr. Abdul Meguid's efforts towards mobilising the Arabs and unifying their stands and will not doubt continue to do so in the best interest of the Arab Nation. Dr. Abdul Meguid, who has vast experience as a diplomat, is no doubt able to play his part tactfully and succeed in his endeavours to rally the Arabs vis-a-vis the common questions facing them, added the paper. A seasoned man like Dr. Abdul Meguid, is bound to help the Arab leaders end their differences and pave the ground for a meeting of Arab heads of state to deal with common issues, added the daily. It warned that the alternative to collective Arab action for containing inter-Arab disputes is further failures for the Arab World and further success for their common foes.

TAHER ADWAN, a columnist in Al Dustour daily, said that the current American diplomatic offensive to rally support for Washington's bid to maintain the U.N. embargo on Iraq is clearly linked to American oil and financial interests. The U.N. Security Council is almost unanimous on the need to lift the sanctions but its members are faced with Washington's intransigence and can do nothing to end the injustice and abort America's intent on destroying an Arab Nation, said the writer. Indeed, Washington's adamant stand reflects the U.S. administration's determination to keep the Arabs weak and in disarray simply to serve Israel's interests, charged the writer. Washington is clinging to its alliance with Israel and is opposed to Egypt's bid to force the Jewish state to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, continued the writer. He said that Washington is displaying its defiance of Arab feelings and stand by seeking to maintain the embargo on Iraq.

Washington Watch

The Republican race begins in New Hampshire

By Dr. James Zoghy

LAST WEEK, nine Republican 1996 presidential hopefuls travelled to New Hampshire to speak at a state Republican Party dinner and, in the process, formally launched the 1996 presidential primary.

The nine who appeared were Kansas Senator and Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, Senator Phil Gramm of Texas, Indiana Senator Richard Lugar, Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, California Representative Robert Dornan, former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, former Secretary of Labour Lynn Martin, former Maryland senate nominee Alan Keyes and CNN commentator Pat Buchanan.

Mr. Dole, who has failed to win in New Hampshire in his two previous presidential runs, appeared to be the most seasoned of the group. Riding high in the glow of polls showing him to be the strong favourite in New Hampshire, he seemed to be optimistic and upbeat, and was energetic enough to speak before nine large audiences in three days.

Mr. Gramm boasted the support of New Hampshire's senior Senator Bob Smith and challenged Mr. Dole's conservative credentials. "I am more conservative than Bob Dole and I am more committed to fundamentally changing America than Bob Dole," he announced. But Mr. Gramm has irritated New Hampshire voters by his association with a challenge to that state's right to hold the nation's first primary — a privilege they hold as central to their political identity.

Mr. Lugar came to New Hampshire as an underdog. Not yet an announced candidate, he decided only recently to enter the race. Mr. Lugar is running on his record in world affairs and hopes to pick up the Indiana-based support that is available now that Dan Quayle, who is also from Indiana, is not running.

Mr. Specter spoke on his support for abortion rights, for the role of the federal government in setting standards for programmes like welfare and education. He was critical of the far right in his party, and essentially courted moderate Republican support, of which there is relatively little in New Hampshire.

Mr. Dornan is a wild Congressman from California. In the House he has been an occasional embarrassment to the Republican leadership, but is a favourite of the far right. He criticised President Bill Clinton and Mr. Gramm for not serving in the military, and if nothing else his presence in New Hampshire was guaranteed to make the debate both energetic and colourful.

Mr. Alexander's appearance at the Republican dinner was the end result of a full year of preparation. A year ago he was a little known but respected lobbyist, but today he boasts one of the best organisations both in New Hampshire and nationally.

Ms. Martin is campaigning against the right-wing domination of the party — a role she played at the 1992 Republican convention in Houston. She has no chance of winning but, at present, the only woman in the race so her name will be considered on many vice-presidential lists.

Mr. Keyes, the first African-American Republican to enter the race is a far right conservative who draws little support except that he adds some depth to the far right of the field.

Mr. Buchanan, according to political analysts, appeared more serious a candidate than in his 1992 outing against George Bush. His message is the simplest and clearest of the group (since his is the most ideological and purely conservative message as well). It is the "America First" theme that propelled him in 1992. As one analyst put it, "he can't win, but he can make mischief in New Hampshire."

Although the New Hampshire primary election is nearly a year away (it will be held Feb. 20, 1996), there are good reasons why the campaign has begun so early.

1) The Republican list is long

When four Republican stars (Mr. Quayle, Mr. Kemp, Mr. Cheaney and Mr. Gingrich) announced in the past few weeks that they wouldn't be running, that left nine leading figures who are almost certain to run. This list of hopefuls does not include at least four more prominent Republican governors who, because of political considerations in their states, are not yet free to declare their intentions. With a list this long, it is important for prospective candidates to

declare their intentions early enough to hire key campaign operatives, sign on major supporters and get commitments from major fundraisers. Early declarations also help the candidates focus on their campaigns.

The importance of announcing early can be seen with the example of Dan Quayle. One of the reasons Mr. Quayle withdrew from consideration was because many of the key fundraisers and political organisers he had hoped to sign to work with his campaign had already made commitments to other candidates.

Within the current field of nine there will be serious competition over who can enlist the support of the party's moderate and conservative wings. Of course, a few candidates will also attempt to establish their credentials as the candidate who can best win support from both wings and unify the party. The earlier a candidate can ensclose themselves among Republican supporters, the better positioned that candidate will be to do well in the primary.

2) The 1996 presidential primary will be expensive

It is generally accepted that to successfully compete — let alone win — the Republican primary, a candidate must raise \$20-25 million by the end of 1995. This amounts to over \$60,000 per day — a huge amount by any measure. This will be all the more difficult, since current campaign law stipulates that any individual can contribute only \$1,000. Needless to say, this will be a difficult task requiring extensive organisation and a strong base of support.

There is another reason why the candidates are running early. To lose the support of a major fundraiser (who has the ability to raise a million dollars on a candidate's behalf) to another candidate would be a crushing blow to a prospective campaign.

At it currently stands, Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, Senator Phil Gramm of Texas and former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander have locked in the largest base of contributors and fundraisers. Other candidates have targeted more narrow groups to fund their efforts, such as Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter (who is relying on moderate Republican and Jewish community support), or CNN commentator Pat Buchanan (who is relying on the same hardline conservative support network that fuelled his 1992 challenge to then-President George Bush). These candidates, and a few others have no prospects of winning but are in the race to influence the debate on issues. In the case of Mr. Specter, for example, the hope is for a more moderate stance on social issues such as abortion, or in Mr. Buchanan's case he hopes to move the party to adopt a harder conservative line on social issues.

3) The race will be short

A final reason why the campaign has begun so early is that the 1996 primary season will be such a short one. More states are moving their election dates to the early months of 1996 so that by the end of March that year the outcome will most probably be determined. This doesn't give candidates the luxury of a slow and steady process of weeks of campaigning in different states so that even if they lose in one state they may be able to win in the next.

There was a slower pace in the 1984 and 1988 campaign, when new strategies were developed each week to meet the needs of each state the campaign was entering. But since in most weeks in 1996 there will be elections in a number of states, a candidate must begin to campaign now and raise funds in order to be able to run a large-scale television advertising campaign in all those states at once.

This makes it more important for candidates to raise money now, win supporters now and begin to campaign now. They must lock in support and build campaign organisations as early as possible so as to be positioned to run a fast-paced campaign when the actual election begins in New Hampshire next Feb. 20.

As it currently stands, the Republican primary is shaping up to be a three-way race. In the top tier of candidates are Mr. Dole, Mr. Gramm and Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Dole is the current frontrunner, polling well over 45 per cent in every state. His nearest rival is Phil Gramm who gets under 15 per cent — closer to 10 per cent in most states.

Mr. Dole's status as Senate Majority Leader and his high

name recognition are the main factors in his favour at this time. Mr. Gramm and Mr. Alexander have built powerful fundraising groups and substantial political organisations, however, and as their visibility increases among voters their polling numbers will rise as well.

Mr. Quayle's withdrawal from the race releases the support he would have received from the Christian right wing of the Republican Party, which supported his strong emphasis on family values. While all of the remaining candidates are trying to swing that support over to themselves, it will be a difficult task.

Both Mr. Dole and Mr. Gramm are vocal supporters of making the Republican Party more inclusive — which in Republican terms means they support the inclusion of Republicans who don't agree with the party's anti-abortion platform. (Mr. Gramm has recently even announced that while he personally opposes abortion, he might accept an abortion-rights supporter as his running-mate).

As a warning to other candidates who might take such a view, the head of the Christian Coalition — the leading political voice of the Christian right wing — recently announced that his group would not support a national Republican ticket which included an abortion-rights supporter. Since the Christian right is a powerful and active force in the Republican Party — a dominant voice in at least 17 states — their support will be critical to the chances of any Republican seeking to retake the White House in the 1996 elections.

While Mr. Dole and Mr. Gramm and Mr. Alexander are all strong conservatives on most economic and social issues, they also seek to be progressive enough to win a national majority. Their efforts to be progressive while courting the right wing at the same time will be a difficult process — and one that will be both interesting and important to watch.

Another factor that bears watching is the role of pro-Israel forces. Although pro-Israel Jewish groups are not typically as strong a force in the Republican Party as they are in the Democratic Party, the coalition of neo-conservatives and Christian fundamentalists (both ardent supporters of the Likud line) makes the issue a potentially volatile one for the Republican primary.

Mr. Dole is clearly not a favourite of this group and they are not comfortable with Mr. Alexander, either. In fact, everyone on their preferred list of candidates (Mr. Quayle, Mr. Kemp and Mr. Gingrich) has withdrawn from the race. They realise that Mr. Specter will not win, so these groups may feel that Mr. Gramm is their only choice.

Finally, there will be an early test for potential candidates to pass: The character question. Mr. Dole has apparently passed this test in the eyes of the national media, having emerged unscathed on this issue after three separate national campaigns. Closer scrutiny of Mr. Gramm may shed unwanted light on some of his questionable financial dealings which many Texans have known about for some time. Mr. Alexander has not been put under the national media's microscope yet, so it is uncertain what the press will find and disclose once they've taken a look.

Should any of these candidates falter early on, or should they fail to capture the major voting blocs within the Republican Party, it would be likely that one or more of those who are currently in will drop out and some popular sitting Republican governor may decide to enter.

Among the governors who would have either a natural constituency or the possibility of raising large-scale money or both, are Massachusetts' Bill Weld, Pete Wilson of California, Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, John Engler of Michigan and Christie Todd Whitman of New Jersey.

Meanwhile back at the White House, President Clinton and the Democrats are watching the friction among Republican presidential candidates with some amount of satisfaction. As the congressional Republicans show a level of unity not matched by their Democratic counterparts, the national Republican presidential hopefuls are exposing the same divisions that cost them the 1992 presidential race.

The question is whether the Republicans can find a candidate who, in the words of Bob Dole, can "both win the Republican nomination and the general election." That is, the party must find a candidate conservative enough to win the Republican primary while being inclusive and progressive enough to win the kind of broad-based national support it takes to win a presidential election.

Third World challenge to nuclear treaty

When the Non-Proliferation Treaty expires in May, extension will be far from automatic, writes Michael Sheridan in Geneva

THE FUTURE of the world's nuclear "insurance policy" — the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — is hanging in the balance because negotiations over its renewal have turned into a complex diplomatic battle with enormous national interests at stake.

The tension was underlined recently as the Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown, said he had been told of U.S. plans to press Britain to put its Trident nuclear system on the NPT negotiating-table.

"The NPT has never been more important than it is now, with access to technology waxing, cold war disciplines waning and rogue states hungering for nuclear arms," maintains John Holm, director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. "But we are engaged in a real struggle."

The NPT came into force 25 years ago, to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons beyond the five acknowledged "weapons states" — Britain, the U.S., Russia, France and China. Its supporters claim it has given the world insurance against disaster by compelling signatory nations to submit to inspections and refrain from producing nuclear weapons. The NPT provided the international legal basis for action to curb the nuclear aspirations of Iraq and North Korea.

There are now 170 signatories out of 185 members of the United Nations. But the treaty's term is up. It must be renewed at a conference opening in April, with a vote by mid-May. Britain, the U.S., Russia and France need to win a simple majority — 86 national votes — to extend it indefinitely. But that is

M. KAHIL



proving far from simple. "A number of countries are attracted to the self-defeating idea that the NPT should be held hostage," Mr. Holm said. They want to make its extension conditional on a new test-ban treaty — which may be agreed within a year or so — or upon guaranteed progress towards disarmament.

But objections to automatic renewal do not stop there, as Mr. Holm acknowledges. "Others, like Iran, think it should be amended to make access to nuclear technology an automatic right of parties — as if we had no memory of what

happened in Iraq — and, indeed, no clue about Iran itself," he said.

Iran has emerged as the standard-bearer for a host of Third World objections to the dominance of the weapons states and their right to dictate what weapons systems should be available to governments.

The struggle is going on at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, where diplomats are engaged in negotiating a new comprehensive test-ban treaty, while lobbying behind the scenes for votes at the NPT showdown in April. Iran's ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, Sirous

Nasser, has waged a skilful campaign to promote causes vital to Tehran.

President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani recently pronounced that "destructive and anti-human nuclear weapons are against our culture, ideology and political viewpoint." Mr. Rafsanjani complained that "America, in order to cover up the nuclear capability of the Jerusalem-occupying regime (Israel), which boldly refuses to sign the NPT, accuses Iran, which does not need nuclear weapons, of trying to gain access to such weapons."

Despite Mr. Rafsanjani's protestations, Western in-

telligence services and foreign ministries have con-

cluded that Iran does have a clandestine nuclear weapons programme, but it is still far away from acquiring a nuclear device. Recent statements suggesting the contrary by the U.S. Defence Secretary, William Perry, and the Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, were intended to step up the pressure on Tehran in response to Mr. Nasser's manoeuvring in Geneva. Iran has thus succeeded in defining the broader political weakness of the NPT with disturbing clarity.

Arab countries led by Syria and Egypt are now

arguing they should not sign on for renewal while Israel is not a signatory at all. Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, responded that Israel would not give in to Iranian threats.

The stand-off in the Middle East mirrors a series of potentially flash-points elsewhere. Among other important countries that have not signed the NPT are India and Pakistan, which are both believed to be capable of waging limited nuclear war. The agreement between North Korea and the U.S. to restrict Pyongyang's nuclear plans is riddled with uncertainty.

Western nations remain concerned about weapons and nuclear-material stockpiles in the fragmented states of the former Soviet Union. Only in South America is there real progress, with a guarantee by Argentina to accede to the treaty.

Diplomats are working on ways to win confidence and votes for an indefinite extension. The weapons powers are ready to assure non-nuclear nations against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Britain's chief negotiator in Geneva, Sir Michael Weston, has told the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee that he believes support for an indefinite NPT extension can be won by "an overwhelming majority." But as diplomats calculated the arithmetic in Geneva, the best bet was for 60 firm votes in favour of indefinite extension, with 15 or 20 waverers. And if only 86 out of 170 signatories renew the treaty, it would be a pretty tattered document.

The Independent

Afghan holy warriors instill fear of the law

In Charasyab, Tim McGirk meets the well-mannered crusaders of the Taliban

WALI MOHAMMAD is a muscular mullah in combat fatigues, turban and a beard so woolly it looks straight from a gag shop. "We don't believe in heavy artillery or weapons, only in the Koran," boomed this cleric, who is also a Taliban commander, when I met him at his headquarters, an abandoned hospital in Charasyab.

His answer to a simple question, such as whether the Taliban want to seize power in Kabul, ranged over Moses, the Prophet Muhammad and the first Islamic caliphate. It was only when an Australian photographer with an earring, a black beret and a pony-tail asked Mr. Mohammad if he could snap his picture that a terse reply was forthcoming. "No, it's un-Islamic." When it was pointed out that no Islamic country does without newspaper photographs or television, he said, "In Afghanistan it will be different. We will allow photographs on passports but nothing else. If you try to take my picture, it will make me very angry."

Contrast this almost quixotic approach with that of one rival militia commander in Kandahar who turned bandit, and because he had a tank and a horde of gunmen, nobody in the dusty southern town dared stop him. Lorries driving towards Kabul were forced to pay a toll of 2 million afghanis (about \$450) crossing his checkpoint. His gunmen's penchant for young boys was grotesque; any youth that took their fancy was forced to undergo a mock public marriage, then dragged off and sodomised. "It was terrible," one foreign relief worker in Kabul said, "anyone who had a son too young to grow a beard kept him inside the house."

Then came the Taliban, an army of Islamic scholars, mullahs and seminarian students, who took up arms to restore order in lawless Afghanistan. Their first big conquest was Kandahar, a town desperately in need of salvation. The Taliban did not launch a big assault. Instead, last October, distinctive in their white turbans, they moved through the city using the Koran and the threat of eternal damnation to seize the bandit mujahedeen into surrendering. When that did not work, as in the case of the commander who was "marrying" young boys, the Taliban were merciless. "They lyn-



ON THE ALERT: A mujahedeen loyal to the Afghan Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood takes up position on top of the frontline hill of Charasyab (AFP photo)

ched the commanders from the gun barrels of their own tanks," said the aid worker.

Now the Taliban are more than 10,000 strong. They bring peace through the Koran, and if that fails, they do not hesitate to use their arsenal of AK-47s, 100 tanks and several MiG fighter planes. Their enemies have scattered; few devout Afghans are willing to risk hell for shooting a cleric. Professor Abdul Sattar Sirat, an Afghan who teaches Islamic law in Mecca, said: "What is happening is a completely new Islamic movement. You can't compare them with anything that's happened before in Islamic history."

A Taliban force is camped eight miles from Kabul. Their presence, and

relatively peaceful conquest of eight southern Afghan provinces, was the excuse given by the president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, for not complying with a U.N. proposal for him to resign and let an interim council try to end the country's bloody, two-year civil war. The U.N. envoy, Mahmud Mestiri, said: "The Taliban's spectacular and rapid ascension from Kandahar to Kabul is the reason why Mr. Rabbani will not transfer power. Instead, the president will cling to office for an extra month. By then, Mr. Rabbani hopes a new U.N.-sponsored council can be chosen, made up of mullahs, mujahedeen, and intellectuals, which is acceptable to Afghanistan's warring ethnic clans and to the Taliban. The Koranic

students vowed not to attack Kabul for the remainder of Mr. Rabbani's presidency.

Foes of the Taliban dismiss them as reactionary and pro-Pakistani, but those I saw at Charasyab were Afghans. Although little is known about their leaders, they take orders from two councils of clerics, one in Kandahar and another across the Pakistani border in Quetta. It is a Pakistani's interests to have stable government in Kabul so that it can open trade routes into the emerging Central Asian republics.

Some of Mr. Rabbani's advisers claim that the Pakistani military intelligence backed the renegade mujahedeen commander, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, against the President's

Kabul forces. When it became apparent that the rebel commander, despite his heavy shelling of the capital, was never able to pound Mr. Rabbani into submission, Pakistan switched support to the Taliban. Another theory is that the prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, is covertly backing the Taliban through the Jamiat Ulema-Islami, a fundamentalist party, to thwart her rivals in Pakistan's divided military intelligence unit who were propping up Mr. Hekmatyar. As one foreign relief expert in Kabul remarked, "If the perception spread that the Taliban were pro-Pakistani, they would be finished. Nothing unites the Afghans like a threat from outside. Nobody is really sure what lies behind the Taliban's

mask." The Koranic students' honesty and good-manners displayed on their rapid advance through Afghanistan has won many converts. They are like the good mullahs of storytellers: They feed themselves by begging bread. One lorry driver, accustomed to paying bribes at gun point was marvelling that he reached Kabul without having to pay a single coin.

Critics of the Red Cross and CARE, a U.S. relief agency, at Maidan Shar were left unlooted by Taliban. Steve Mast, CARE's director, found 15 heavily armed Taliban sitting in his office, but the computers and other valuables were left alone. "I'd seen those young faces, that jokey enthusiasm, before — in the

1980s when the Afghans went off to fight the Russians. You look at the other mujahedeen and they're all pinch-faced and money-taking."

Despite the Taliban's reputation as fundamentalists, they encourage foreign aid agencies to keep up their humanitarian relief in Afghanistan. One Taliban leader, Mohammad Rabbani, said that the Islamic students do not want to rule Afghanistan. Their aim, he said, is to disarm all the mujahedeen warlords who have killed over 20,000 Afghans. "We must collect all the guns. Otherwise, there will always be one side fighting against another," said the cleric.

The Kabul regime is run

by Tajiks, from the north, while the Taliban are Pathans from the south. However, the Taliban commander insisted that all ethnic and religious communities should be represented in the next government which takes over on March 21 when the president resigns.

The Taliban peaceful message is what the Afghans, bludgeoned and weary after 14 years of war, want to hear. CARE's Steve Mast said he was stopped by a young mujahedeen who said, "give me a job doing anything — even shovelling gravel — that pays 2,000 afghanis (40 pence) a day and I'll gladly give up my gun."

The Independent

By Anthony Shadid
The Associated Press

More than \$18 billion in aid — and Egypt's still waiting to develop

CAIRO — The United States has poured more than \$18 billion into Egypt since 1975. Politics and bureaucracy have prevented it from becoming a model of what the West's money and know-how can do.

Peace with Israel secured Egypt a lucrative position as one of America's strategic allies. Its reward was a Washington-sponsored plan to rebuild a country wrecked by war, promote economic development and encourage private business.

The accomplishments — in just 20 years — have been impressive. Telephone and electricity

systems have been modernised, sewage no longer spills into the streets of Cairo and Alexandria, hundreds of schools have been built, and population growth has slowed.

"These are tangible results," said Hoda Zaki Khalil, deputy director of Project Hope, an aid group in Egypt. "From a social, health and people's point of view, the results are tangible."

But some critics wonder whether more should not be expected from so much money.

Estimates of Egypt's unemployment rate still range up to 20 per cent, as many as half of all workers do not work full time, and per capita income has stagnated at about \$650 yearly, the World Bank says.

Despite billions of dollars in aid, Egypt has failed to achieve a dynamic, open economy capable of sustainable growth.

"The people are still living with some of the same problems," said Magdi Sidhom, programme manager for Catholic Relief Ser-

vices. "If they read in the newspapers that America would cut the aid, nobody in the street would feel the difference."

Development specialists often pin the blame on the government, whose plodding pace of economic reform is referred to by some as "gradualism."

The pace is hampered by the government's fears of the social chaos that reform could produce. President Hosni Mubarak is all too aware of the riots in 1977

that forced the government to rescind its decision to end subsidies that held down prices for basic commodities.

The government's heavy-handed bureaucracy has also stymied efforts, says a recent study for the U.S. Agency for International Development.

It argues that America's big projects like phones and electricity were well-designed and well-operated. But once in place, they ran up against bad economic policies — regulation, price controls and subsidies.

"A clear lesson is that in a bad policy environment even technically sound projects cannot generate a good rate of return," the report said.

Pasqua, joker in Balladur pack, becomes liability

By John Follain
Reuters

PARIS — Hardline Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, the target of American anger in a Franco-U.S. spy row, is losing his image as prime minister Edouard Balladur's chief asset in the presidency campaign and turning into a liability.

A bluff, charismatic right-winger with a tough reputation, he has stumbled into controversy twice this month — in the spy dispute and in a political phone-tapping scandal.

The U.S. embassy in Paris accused him on Friday of making statements that were "neither true nor credible" in blaming Washington for leaks about the spy case.

The bumpy Pasqua, 66, had previously prompted a reproach from the French foreign ministry for allegedly spilling the beans over Paris's request to Washington to recall five Americans, including four diplomats, it accused of spying.

Only a few days previously, Mr. Balladur said police — who are under Mr. Pasqua's orders — had misinformed him when they sought permission to bug the phone of a psychiatrist related to an anti-corruption judge.

holding up a mouse-like Mr. Balladur by the tail. "Drop Pasqua? why? or rather, how?" says Mr. Balladur.

Until a few days ago, Mr. Pasqua was frequently tipped as a likely prime minister if Mr. Balladur won the April-May presidential election. Some polls have shown him as the most popular cabinet minister.

Stealing voters from extreme-right National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, Mr. Pasqua has since his appointment as interior minister in March 1993 won popularity for his tough stand on immigration and law and order.

His finest hour was at Christmas, when he shared Mr. Balladur's limelight after elite police commandos stormed a hijacked Air France jet in Marseille. The four Muslim fundamentalists died in the attack. He also won plaudits for the seizure of guerrilla mastermind "Carlos the Jackal" last year in Sudan.

As interior minister in the previous conservative government, he had in 1986-88 earned the opprobrium of civil rights groups and anti-racist campaigners.

"We must show exemplary toughness even at the risk of sometimes being unjust," Mr. Pasqua wrote in his memoirs.

He became notorious among civil libertarians in 1986 for sending 101 illegal Malian immigrants home on a special charter flight — an unprecedented move in a

country that thinks of itself as the cradle of the modern human rights movement.

His uncompromising talk appeared to be out of step with Mr. Balladur's pledge to govern by consensus and show respect for the wishes of all French people.

Mr. Pasqua is also the government's senior euro-sceptic — he launched a vigorous campaign against the Maastricht Treaty on European union — and represents a maverick RPR right wing.

His amiable, almost bumbling exterior and earthy, unpretentious language give away little of his tough approach.

But he is a typical product of his streetwise upbringing in the French Riviera and a veteran of the wartime resistance as well as Charles de Gaulle's private militia, the SAC.

He despises liberals, calls human rights campaigners "fifth columnists" and has likened the socialists to the mafia.

Mr. Pasqua was born into a poor family of Corsican extraction in the southern town of Grasse on April 18, 1927. His father was a policeman and his mother a perfume factory worker.

After the war he worked for the pasta manufacturer Ricard and entered politics under the mantle of his mentor De Gaulle.

Political leader of the richest department in France, the Hauts-de-Seine west of Paris, he is also his party's speaker in the senate.

King honours veteran officials

(Continued on page 12)

Order, Mohammad Ali Budeir with Al Istiklal Medal of the First Order (received by his son Issam Budeir), Subhi Jabri with Al Istiklal Medal of the First Order, Ibrahim Tajiddin with Al Istiklal Medal of the First Order, Khalifah Al Omari with Al Istiklal Medal of the Second Order and Tawfiq Kassar with Al Istiklal Medal of the Second Order.

The King also received veteran educationist Bashir Al Sabbagh and voiced appreciation of efforts he exerted in education.

King meets delegations

(Continued from page 1)

The delegation also pledged full support from the U.S. and American organisations for Jordan's efforts for a comprehensive peace settlement. It also promised efforts to ensure the success of the economic conference to be held in Amman in October.

A similar pledge also came from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre delegation.

Shimon Samuel, head of the centre's department on international relations, told the Jordan Times that the centre had taken note of a trend in the new U.S. Congress towards cutting foreign assistance and that it was opposed to such a policy, "particularly when it comes to countries such as Jordan, which has taken courageous risks towards peace and tolerance."

Mr. Samuel said the delegation visited Washington

before flying on to the Middle East and had heard from members of Congress of the proposed cuts in foreign assistance.

Mr. Samuel emphasised the centre did not agree with such an approach and said it believed that "it is a responsibility of the U.S." to ensure that Jordan is able to maintain its security and stability and to allow its people to reap the benefits of peace.

The delegation's meeting with the King was "very good," said Mr. Samuel, adding that the team, taking note of His Majesty's interest in flying, also presented a flying jacket to the King with an emblem of peace on it.

The Associated Press quoted Rabbi Marvin Hier, a founder of the centre, as announcing the peace prize in a short speech at the meeting: "I am deeply honoured to extend to you an invitation to deliver a keynote address

some time during 1995 and to receive the Museum of Tolerance's Peace Award, in recognition of your commitment to world peace and stability."

The rabbi recalled the speech the King made at the Oct. 26 signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty. "None of us will ever forget that sun-baked day in the desert when Your Majesty spoke so eloquently... remarking how sad it was that your late grandfather, King Abdullah, did not live to see the historic day."

"But for the generation that did witness it. Your Majesty, your words brought hope and comfort, for we recognise they were not the words of one who merely seeks the cold peace that comes from the absence of war, but rather the words of one who looks beyond — to the peace found among friends."

Mr. Samuel said the King "agreed to accept the prize and also make a major speech at the Museum of

Tolerance in Los Angeles at a date to be fixed later."

The centre official pointed out that Simon Wiesenthal, a Nobel Prize nominee, and U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali had declared 1995 the "International Year of Tolerance," marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

The delegation is scheduled to meet with Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and other officials on Wednesday before heading for Israel and then to Morocco.

Rabbi Cooper, the delegation head, said it was the first time a delegation representing the centre had come to Jordan and was impressed that the first journey came through the crossing between Israel and Jordan.

"It is clear that Jordan took major steps to make such crossings possible," said Mr. Cooper. "Indeed, it is a long way ahead, but the first solid steps have been taken."

New Moroccan government faces economic challenges

RABAT (R) — Morocco's new government marks a swing back to party politics after a brief spell of technocratic rule at a time when drought, inflation and declining tourism pose challenges following a year of record growth, analysts say.

The previous government of technocrats had succeeded in taking the North African country of 26 million people closer to its goal of admission into the club of free-market economies.

But the 36-member cabinet of centre-right politicians and technocrats approved by the king Monday can expect some turbulent months ahead. Drought and falling revenues threaten to reverse the record economic growth in 1994.

The likelihood of a poor wheat harvest, rising inflation, a slump in tourism and falling exports are the most pressing problems facing the new government.

Independent analysts expect negative growth in 1995, largely because of the drought. Morocco has been buying large amounts of wheat on the world market and by February had exhausted French government

credits for wheat purchases.

The absence of rain has affected other crops like potatoes, tomatoes and citrus fruits, the main agricultural exports.

The heavy pace of privatisations set in motion last year continues but liberalisation of trade in key commodities has been postponed until later this year because of rising prices and rumblings among the workforce fearing job losses.

Unemployment, officially said to be running at 16 per cent of the workforce but believed by analysts to be more than 20 per cent, is another headache. Roughly half the population is under 25.

The freeing of crude oil imports in December proved inflationary, hitting industry and transport. Analysts expect inflation to rise to seven per cent from around five per cent.

Although tourism revenue rose slightly in 1994, the number of tourists fell 21 per cent. The former minister of tourism, Serge Berdugo, was among ministers excluded from the cabinet.

The king's decision to reappoint Abdul Latif Filali,

a 67-year-old liberal and a career diplomat, was welcomed by businessmen in the burgeoning financial centre of Casablanca as a sign of his commitment to economic liberalisation.

Mr. Filali also retained Privatisation Minister Abdel Rahim Saadi, a technocrat. But gloomy economic forecasts are believed to have been behind the removal of Mourad Cherif from finance.

He was replaced by Mohamed Kabbaj, a former public works minister and member of the biggest parliamentary party, the centre-right Constitutional Union (C.U.).

Diplomats say there is no real economic crisis and note that Morocco is among the small number of African countries that has a healthy agricultural sector.

"The economy is pretty dull and bland but Morocco is not a tiger and never will be. It's just a small market and the problems are the same ones that the previous government and the one before it faced," said one diplomat.

"As long as they can afford to feed their people, they will be able to carry on," he added.

OTTAWA (R) — Canada's liberal government, fearing the wrath of world financial markets, introduced a tough budget Monday aimed at rectifying chronic deficits with billions of dollars in spending cuts.

The budget prescribed savings by laying off thousands of civil servants, eliminating decades-old subsidies and raising corporate taxes.

"There are times in the progress of a people when fundamental challenges must be faced, fundamental choices made — a new course charted," Finance Minister Paul Martin told parliament.

"For Canada, this is one of those times."

The wealthy industrialist turned politician introduced the 164 billion Canadian dollar (\$117 billion) budget that included a plan to cut 13.4 billion Canadian dollars (\$9.5 billion) in spending over two years.

Since the devaluation of the Mexican peso, Prime

Minister Jean Chretien's liberal regime has been under pressure to attack Canada's chronic deficits.

The currency was hampered earlier this year to nine-year lows and interest rates leaped on fears of a debt crisis here, threatening to derail the Canada's strong expansion.

Just as Mexico was punished for its huge debts, economists were warning that Canada could not continue tapping international money

marketing to fund generous social programmes and the cost of its large government infrastructure.

Prior to the budget, Monday's Investor Service gave Canada a strong wakeup call by announcing it had put the country's vaunted triple A credit rating under review.

Mr. Martin announced in his budget that the government was actually bettering its deficit targets made last year and was on track to reduce the deficit to 25 billion

Canadian dollars (\$17.8 billion) by the fiscal year 1997, which ends on March 31.

With public debt of about a half a trillion Canadian dollars (\$357.5 billion), Canada boasts the worst debt load in the Group of Seven industrialised nations save Italy, when measuring the debt against total value of the economy.

Mr. Martin said debt will no longer be growing faster than the economy by 1997 and will begin to decline.

Oman lowers electricity costs for industries

DUBAI (R) — The Arab Gulf state of Oman, a small oil producer trying to stimulate economic growth, decided Tuesday to lower electricity costs for factories outside industrial zones, the Oman News Agency reported.

"In accordance with the country's policies in encouraging and supporting industry's role in development... the government decided to lower electricity fees for factories outside of industrial zones," it said.

It said the price of one kilowatt hour was lowered to 12 besas from 16 besas for the

eight months of winter. The remaining four months would average 24 besas each kilowatt hour.

One Omani riyal (\$2.60) has 1,000 besas.

"The decision was aimed at encouraging factories based near sources of primary local resources... to achieve the strategic industrial aim of utilising local raw materials and to encourage regional development," the agency said.

Oman has introduced other measures to encourage industry such as some tax exemptions and providing soft loans, the agency reported.

Mexican economy continues to sink despite U.S. aid

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Muddled by gloom and uncertainty, Mexico's economy continued to spin downward on Monday despite a massive U.S. aid package — or perhaps even because of it.

The main stock market index plummeted 4.9 per cent Monday — the worst one-day loss in percentage terms in at least a year.

Delays in long-rumoured revisions of the government's economic forecast for the year — and uncertainty about what it will contain — helped drive the index down 106.37 points to close at 1447.52.

The market's main, indexed stocks have lost nearly 21 per cent of their value since the Feb. 17 close, despite formal agreement on the U.S. aid package on Feb. 21.

The market index is off by about 49 per cent since Sept. 23, 1994, even in terms of the peso, which itself has been devalued by more than 40 per cent over that period.

The peso slipped again on

Monday. Worth about 29 cents in mid-December, it closed Monday at 16.8 cents, down from 17 cents last Friday. One dollar now buys 5.945 pesos.

Rumours swept Mexico's business community last week that the government was about to announce a new agreement on wage and price controls over the weekend. But no such agreement surfaced.

In fact, the AP-Dow Jones News Service and the New York Times reported over the weekend that the government planned to end the agreement between the government, labour and business leaders, known here as the "pacto," which has guided the economy since the mid-1980s.

Treasury Secretary Guillermo Ortiz admitted last week that the government also would have to revise its economic projections for 1995, admitting that its earlier outlook for interest

rates, spending, the value of the peso and overall economic performance were overly optimistic.

But by Monday, there was no official answer to whether there would be a new pacto, or to what the official economic targets would be. Increasing uncertainty, Labour Secretary Santiago Onate denied Monday that the pacto would be scuttled — but gave no hint of when it might be adjusted.

The market is going to suffer "when investors have to ask questions like that and don't have the answers to them," said Felix Boni, an analyst at the Mexican brokerage company Interacciones.

"All those questions are still being raised and you still have the fact of high interest rates, which are still at ruinous levels," he said.

Mexico's dollar-linked treasury bills sold last week at a 59 per cent interest rate.

China's top leaders identify agriculture problems

BEIJING (Agencies) — China's top leaders issued urgent appeals Tuesday for attention to agriculture, highlighting the difficulty of feeding the world's largest population on a rapidly shrinking arable area.

Western diplomats said the sounding of alarm bells by Communist Party chief and President Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng reflected a traditional communist principle of self-sufficiency coupled with worries about disappearing fields.

"The Chinese have always had this thing about feeding their own people," one diplomat said.

"Despite government calls, farmland is still going to real estate," the diplomat said.

Party chief warned a national conference about the dangers of instability caused by a widening gap between incomes of farmers and rural residents. Urban incomes rose a real 8.8 per cent in 1994 compared with five per cent for rural dwellers.

China's leaders are anxious that income disparities and rural unemployment could build into discontent and popular unrest.

Mr. Li branded agriculture as the weakest link in the economy and said a "provincial governor responsibility system" should be established to combat falling harvests.

"This year is significant for the increase of grain and cot-

ton output, and the task is a very hard one," Xinhua news agency quoted Mr. Li as telling the meeting Monday.

China's grain harvest was 444.5 million tonnes in 1994, down 2.5 per cent from the previous year.

China feeds one-quarter of the world's population on just seven per cent of its arable land — and the area is shrinking rapidly in a building frenzy financed by the success of 16-year-old economic reforms to transform Stalinist central planning into a market system.

Mr. Li forecast a bumper harvest in 1995 — officials have predicted a crop of 459.8 to 465.9 million tonnes.

But he warned regional governments not to "water down" central directives to boost harvests, a veiled reference to the increasing independence of provincial leaders who ignore Beijing directives to satisfy local lobbies.

China could not afford to relax, Mr. Li said.

"There are going to be even more natural calamities this year than last," he said citing meteorological forecasts.

For example, rice-growing coastal Jiangsu province has for several months been gripped by a drought that has dried out 130,000 hectares (3.2 million acres) of farmland — in a booming area where construction is rampant.

The party chief warned that lagging agricultural

growth could spawn problems that would threaten inflation, stability and national economic development.

"Some development coastal areas have had to import large amounts of grain in recent years because of a drastic drop in the amount of acreage under cultivation and decreasing yields, a trend which must be reversed... this year," Mr. Jiang said.

The policy was hampered by lack of cooperation from local officials.

"Quite a few comrades have yet to understand the special importance and difficulties involved in solving agricultural problems," the party chief said.

Shortages of farm goods, including cotton, sugar, edible oil, pork and in some areas grain, are a major cause of inflation, running at 24 per cent — its highest level since the communists took power in China in 1949.

It is more profitable to process, distribute or sell farm goods than to produce them and a recent official report said grain traders were making huge profits off low-paid farmers.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government forecast Tuesday that 1995 inflation would be "lower" than last year's high level, while pinpointing agriculture and loss-making state firms as other major economic headaches.

"It is estimated that price rises in 1995 will be lower than the previous year,"

State Statistics Bureau (SSB) deputy director-general Shao Zongming told journalists, but steered clear of mentioning the previous official retail price index forecast of 15 per cent.

Retail prices rose at an annual rate of 21.7 per cent in 1994, more than double the government's initial target, while economic growth also exceeded its nine per cent goal, to hit 11.8 per cent.

Foreign diplomats, who believe the estimates so far put forward by the SSB for this year are equally optimistic, attribution Mr. Shao's reticence to the approach of next week's annual National People's Congress session, at which Premier Li Peng is to make the government's official forecasts.

One economist predicted the Mr. Li's estimates may be even lower than the SSB forecasts, saying, "the target is not set according to any scientific exercise, but because of some political objective."

"They are still more interested in sending a signal than getting it right," said the economist, who questions the accuracy of the government's year-on-year inflation statistics since late 1994, which he argued showed a drop in inflation not reflected in the month-on-month data.

He said the government "would be doing well" to bring the retail price index down to 17 or 18 per cent and the consume price index,

which rose 24.1 per cent in 1994, down below 20 per cent this year.

"The likely outcome is that we will see some modest improvement in inflation and see growth slowing, but inflation is still going to be pretty high," he said.

At a press conference on 1994 statistics, Mr. Shao forecast that China's M2 money supply — the sum of all cash to circulation and bank deposits — would rise 24 per cent this year, down from 34.4 per cent in 1994.

The official said that, in addition to "rather high increase in consumer prices," the "major problems" facing the Chinese economy at the end of last year included slow agricultural development and "many difficulties" in state-owned enterprises.

He said 33.8 per cent of state firms were losing money, estimating that the value of losses had risen 12 per cent in 1994 to 44.8 billion yuan (\$5.33 billion). The situation in the country's 14,000 large- and medium-sized enterprises was slightly better, with 25 per cent in the red.

The sector's output rose just 5.5 per cent, compared with an overall figure of 18 per cent, while stockpiles increased by 24 per cent to 175.8 billion yuan, Mr. Shao said.

Triangular debt between enterprises was also "serious," he said, estimating them at 400 billion yuan.

Iran's foreign debt reaches \$36b

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's short and medium-term foreign debt has reached around \$36 billion, the president of the Iranian chamber of commerce said.

Ali Naghi Khamushi, quoted by newspapers here Tuesday, said \$10 billion of the total sum was accounted for by goods purchased but not yet delivered.

Iranian official figures had until now put the country's foreign debt at \$33 billion, accumulated largely due to the unrestrained imports of consumer goods from 1990 to 1993.

Iran managed to reschedule \$15 billion of overdue debts last year and has sharply cut back imports in a bid to save hard currency to pay back its debt.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY MARCH 1, 1995

By Thomas S. Pearson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Try to help an associate solve a problem. If you can you will gain their good will. Don't take risks with money now and avoid a troublemaker who will make problems for you.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be sure to use utmost care in motion and avoid possible accident today. Steer clear of one who likes to criticize you and makes you feel small.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You may be confused about finances in the morning, but later you can advance with clarity. Cut down on expenses and you will have more money when there is a real emergency.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be more kind instead of forceful with your friends today and you will gain their respect. This is not a good day for taking risks in any instance.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be precise in handling important business matters and avoid trouble later on. A new plan needs more study to be successful in the long run.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't criticize a loyal friend in the morning or there could be a severance of connections. Think along optimistic lines and all will be fine.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Wait until the afternoon before going after your aims and get excellent results! Show others that you are alert and clever in any circumstance.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't postpone important duties in the morning or you will regret it. Don't trust your intuition during the day or you could be in a bad situation.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Some business or other matters could worry you during the day, but all evening, its going to be OK. Maintain your poise and don't allow any problems to disturb you.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 30) Mornings may find an associate to be an annoying soul, so keep your distance. Postpone handling a business matter until a more prosperous moment comes your way.

AQUARIUS: (January 31 to February 19) You are gregarious by nature and this is a fine time to visit old friends and exchange views. Safeguard your health against unexpected illness. Go out this evening to enjoy a fine dinner.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A fine day to contact influential persons who can help you advance in your career. Make some long range plans for the future and try to stick by them this time.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square to form four ordinary words.

CLECY
KISLY
EXLUDE
TESSMY

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's Jumbles: CURRY VALET INVADE RACIAL
Answer: The first repairman told he was in a rut

Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff

THE Daily Crossword

by Chuck Deodone

ACROSS

- Future orous
- Saltine
- Predatory person
- Sir in Savile
- Seize sight
- Greek marketplace
- Actor Kevin
- Phenolphthalein
- Coastal, e.g.
- Way off the mark
- Years
- Small amount
- Ignited
- Spanish hero
- Boys
- Tightwad
- Use the intercom
- Conflic
- Reassure
- Deals ruthlessly
- Painter Charles
- Wilson
- Poet
- Author Ferner
- King's subject
- Slam pod
- Humor
- Legislator: abbr.
- Muslim official
- Journey portion
- Puller winner, James
- Complete on
- initial step
- Glass
- Do some
- Biological grouping
- Adress Letis
- Formerly
- Scrub
- Unimpaired
- Turner of networks
- Carry on

DOWN

- Cavalr source
- Carve
- Burt's ex
- General
- Scowcroft
- French kiss, e.g.
- Royal name of Norway
- Mort's mate
- up (emote)
- Puller winner, James
- Attendance check
- Estrogenant
- TV's "Can Cook"
- Thirteen months
- Evergreen
- Susan of "LA Law"
- La — Milan
- 30 Mids
- Pull of
- Scowcroft
- Soap ingredient
- Adress Maryann
- Genealogy
- Campers' rights
- Glass
- Laflores
- Sermon seat
- Danacher
- Young'un
- Alarm horn
- Vacation spot
- Spy
- Leave the pack
- Partumary oil
- Physiology
- ba
- Pum cata
- Freddy's street

Business Daily Beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Transport company distributes JD 0.5m in dividends

THE GENERAL assembly of the Unified Company for Organising Land Transport (a public shareholding company) approved distributing JD 500,000 in dividends, at a rate of 10 per cent, from the JD 1.27 million profit the company recorded in 1994. The profit represented 25.53 per cent of the capital. The company collected JD 35.1 million in freight, of which JD 8.1 million were from internal transport.

The company transported 2.57 million tonnes of cargo last year, 2.25 million of which were inside the Kingdom and 0.32 million tonnes to Iraq. Another 1.3 million tonnes of phosphate were transported by the company's trucks from the mines to Aqaba. The company was able to get the deal for transporting phosphate this year also for JD 7 million in addition to the 12 million from the Ministry of Supply to transport various products all over the country. The Unified Company for Organising Land Transport was established April 2, 1982 with a JD 2 million capital.

In 1993 it was registered as a public shareholding company with a JD 5 million capital. The Ports Corporation owns 14.55 per cent of the company, the Iraq-Jordan Land Transportation Company owns 14.39 per cent and the Vehicles Owners Federation 26.58 per cent. The company had JD 7.6 million in total assets at the end of 1994 (AI Ra'i).

THE VOLUME of capital invested by 581 companies which registered in January 1995 was less than the volume invested by 610 companies in January 1994 as the amounts were JD 61,656,540 and JD 17,397,360 respectively; JD 42.2 million of the amount invested in January 95 were by seven public shareholding companies. The number of companies registered through the whole of 1994 was 4,462 with an overall JD 408.4 million capital. Twenty five of the firms were public shareholding companies (AI Dus-tour).

THE CREDIT committee at the Development and Employment Fund (DEF) extended JD 360,900 financing to 68 projects in January. Most of the credits went to the service ventures which accounted for half of the projects. Industrial ventures took only 33 per cent of the financing or JD 119,213. Most of the beneficiaries were in the Amman region followed by the Irbid and Balqa governorates. The DEF has received 111 applications for JD 651,385 of credits since the beginning of the year (AI Ra'i).

OMAN Airways is expected to be the first of many airlines which will be flying to Amman soon. The Qatari Airways and Sudan Airways began flights to Amman recently. British Airways has also resumed its flights after halting them before the Gulf war (AI Ra'i).

NutriDar company has finalised its registration procedures and the general assembly elected Dr. Sami Farah Al Halabi as chairman of the board of directors. Mohammad Sadeq Al Fityani was elected vice-chairman. Nabih Hassan Al Nabulsi, Abdul Rahman Jardaneh, Azmi Mohammad Latouf, Mohammad Murtada Yaish, Mohammad Tashin Salim Al Sabbagh, Walid Edgar Finan and Mohammad Rashid Alch were elected members. According to Mr. Fityani, the company's designs are ready and the tender to build the project's structure is expected to be announced in August.

Bank governor 'right' to let Barings collapse

LONDON (R) — Bank of England Governor Eddie George had just walked into the ski chalet in the French Alps when the phone rang. Minutes later he had abandoned any thoughts of a family skiing holiday and was on his way back to London to face the biggest challenge since taking over the top job at Britain's central bank in 1993.

The phone call from the bank's London headquarters in Threadneedle Street last Friday broke the news that Britain's oldest investment bank, Barings, had been brought to its knees by the actions of a rogue trader named Nick Leeson in Singapore.

Mr. George, known as "steady Eddie" by admirers for his calm, competent style, faced a dilemma: Could Barings be rescued and, if not, should it be allowed to go under?

In the event, he battled in vain over the weekend to try to find buyers for Barings' businesses. But the potential losses from the trader's huge derivatives exposure made it impossible.

So Mr. George — chain-smoking as usual through a tense weekend of secret talks — took a calculated gamble that the Barings debacle would not cause a worldwide banking crash and it was better to let the bank fail than bail it out with public money. It was a typically bold decision.

sion by Mr. George, a plain-speaking man who eschews the trappings of high office.

His tough line on Barings was certainly one of the biggest gambles in his 33-year career at the bank. But so far, to judge by the verdicts of the markets, it seems to have paid off as calm returned to share trading from Tokyo to London.

"The bank has taken the right course in allowing Barings to go under," the Financial Times newspaper said Tuesday. "There is no sign, so far, that the collapse represents a threat to the banking system."

Others agreed. "The sight of a bank as eminent as Barings going under may well have effect of getting other institutions to keep a beady eye on their Leesons," the Independent newspaper said in an editorial.

While some dissenters said the collapse would do lasting damage to London's reputation as a financial centre, most analysts said Mr. George had steered a steady course at a time when some were warning of a financial meltdown from the affair.

On Monday he explained patiently to the world's press how he battled to save Barings but was defeated by the open-ended nature of the potential losses. "It would have been like pouring money into a black hole," he said.

Complex market strategies behind Barings collapse

LONDON (R) — The world now knows a lone maverick trader forced Britain's oldest merchant bank into financial ruin. But how did he do it?

Barings sustained losses of over \$1 billion as trader Nick Leeson bet on the fortunes of Japan's stock market ... and lost. But even experts are divided over how just one rogue dealer could trigger a leading bank's collapse.

One theory runs that last December, Mr. Leeson used financial instruments known as options to gamble on rises and falls in Japan's best-known stock index, the Nikkei 225.

In a series of complex trades, which involved selling options, Mr. Leeson left Barings vulnerable to the vagaries of the Japanese market.

The trader executed the deals at what is known as a "strike price," close to the stock market level at the time. He was betting on how

volatile the stock market would be in coming months.

But the wager was very risky, and London dealers calculated that this trade alone cost Barings 20 million yen (\$2 million) for every point the Nikkei 225 index fell below 18,500.

Unfortunately for the trader, the Nikkei 225 slipped below that level in January. So, Mr. Leeson frantically tried to push the Nikkei back up above 18,500 by buying forward contracts, or futures, on both the Osaka Securities Exchange (OSE) and the Singapore exchange, SIMEX. Traders in the past have nudged prices up by heavily buying certain stocks or index futures.

But this second gamble was also doomed. The Nikkei kept falling and Mr. Leeson was hit simultaneously with a loss-making options position, and margin calls from the two exchanges for futures posi-

tions, now in the red.

Margins are deposits required by futures exchanges to open and then run positions. Once a trader starts losing money on a deal, more margin is needed to keep his or her position open.

Other brokers suggest Mr. Leeson's strategy was nowhere near as complicated. They say he bought a huge number of Nikkei futures at both SIMEX and OSE late last year, banking on a stock market rally before the contracts expired this March.

As the market caved in, the Barings trader should have considered selling the futures positions back on the exchanges at a loss. Instead he allegedly bought more, still hoping the stock market would recover before his futures contracts expired.

Mr. Leeson was then hit by a double blow with two sets of margin calls from both exchanges now outstanding.

Bidders sniff round Barings as manhunt goes on

LONDON (Agencies) — Potential buyers picked over the corpse of Barings Tuesday as police stepped up their hunt for a rogue trader whose \$27 billion had bet toppled Britain's oldest investment bank.

Interested bidders were holding talks with court-appointed administrators who are looking to sell Barings, which collapsed Sunday with losses of \$1 billion in what its chairman said may have been an act of deliberate sabotage.

Peter Baring, the head of the 233-year-old bank that bears his name, told the Financial Times that Singapore-based trader Nick Leeson may have been encouraged to bring down the firm.

Mr. Baring, who said fraud may have been going on for a year, speculated that someone could have approached Mr. Leeson with a plan to profit from wrecking the bank by exploiting the differential between a "long" position based on a rising market and a "short" position that bets on a falling market.

Mr. Baring said: "Let us suppose the putative associate approached our trader and said, 'you should build up a hidden long position at Barings so great that when Barings discovers it they cannot possibly sustain it and remain solvent.'"

"I, meanwhile, will build a short position, and when Barings duly fails, I will have a wonderful opportunity to cover my short with a profit."

But Mr. Baring, who counts Britain's Queen Elizabeth among his clients, said there was no way of knowing what actually happened until Mr. Leeson was found.

The British government has ordered an inquiry and financial regulators around the world are checking their controls to reduce the risk of something similar happening in their markets.

Neighbours in Singapore said the London-born trader, who celebrated his 28th birthday Saturday, and his wife had disappeared Thursday. The only trace remained the newspapers piled up on their door mat.

Singapore investigators searched Mr. Leeson's home Tuesday as police in neighbouring Malaysia circulated a description of him throughout the country. He was last

seen checking out of the Regent Hotel in Kuala Lumpur Friday.

Mr. Leeson broke Barings by betting a staggering \$27 billion on Japanese shares and bonds in a speculative binge that the bank says he deliberately concealed from his supervisors.

But the gamble turned sour as Tokyo share prices fell and by the end of last week Barings discovered that it was sitting on losses of at least \$900 million — more than its capital. By Monday morning the fall in Japanese stock prices had taken that figure over \$1 billion.

Bank of England Governor Eddie George made frantic efforts at the weekend to find a rescuer but failed because no one could put a final figure on Barings losses.

These will not be known until the stock market futures contracts that Mr. Leeson bought — paper promises to buy baskets of shares — expire next month.

But Barings administrators said Tuesday that rival banks were showing keen interest in a firm that until last week had an envied reputation as a sound pillar of the British banking establishment.

"The administrators are continuing to talk to a lot of people on behalf of Barings," a spokesman said.

U.S. investment bank Morgan Stanley, which recently tried unsuccessfully to buy London investment bank S.G. Warburg, said it would be interested at the right price.

Leading British banks are also potential bidders for part or all of the firm, which employs 4,000 people worldwide.

After tumbling Monday in initial shock at the news, Asian financial markets recovered some of their poise Tuesday. Tokyo stocks rose 1.46 per cent, recovering more than a third of the previous day's 3.8 per cent fall.

London shares and the pound drifted lower, but dealers said this was more due to nervousness about a key parliamentary vote over Europe on Wednesday rather than to the Barings debacle.

"I'm pleased to say it appears to be a temporary hiccup," said Trevor Laughton of brokers Kleinwort Benson.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET					
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHEKESANI					
TELEPHONE: 660170 / 663170					
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 28/02/1995					
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE		PREV.	CLOSING
		TRADED	CLOSING	PRICE	PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	100	18885	189.500	188.750	
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	2000	9000	4.500	4.500	
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	355	1545	4.320	4.350	
THE HOUSING BANK	3315	20087	6.050	6.060	
JORDAN KIWAT BANK	9000	9000	3.000	3.000	
JORDAN GULF BANK	8200	11257	1.380	1.360	
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	3608	14071	3.910	3.900	
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	5300	21580	4.100	4.050	
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	28750	35813	1.270	1.270	
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	450	644	1.420	1.430	
BANKS SECTOR		55121	142754	INDEX NUMBER: 161.12 CHANGE: -0.29%	
ARABIAN SEAS INSURANCE	180	300	2.000	2.000	
JORDAN PRINCE INSURANCE	200	494	2.520	2.520	
INSURANCE SECTOR		380	794	INDEX NUMBER: 127.16 CHANGE: 0.00%	
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	9092	14408	1.570	1.590	
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	12700	17435	1.500	1.500	
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	150	735	4.900	4.900	
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	2200	7509	3.390	3.420	
JORDAN PRESS FOUNDATION / ALRAI	500	5841	11.600	11.750	
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CONSUMERS HOTELS	10600	25122	2.350	2.370	
ARAB ENTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	200	722	3.540	3.620	
SERVICES SECTOR		34442	71772	INDEX NUMBER: 132.77 CHANGE: +0.86%	
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	8674	26099	3.010	3.020	
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	783	7469	9.480	9.420	
THE JORDAN WORTED MILLS	1000	7630	7.630	7.630	
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	6116	28119	4.590	4.590	
THE JORDAN FIVES MANUFACTURING	350	935	2.670	2.670	
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	13486	13486	2.890	2.920	
DAR AL DAKA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	7350	58643	7.970	7.980	
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	2200	2095	0.970	0.960	
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	5016	5016	1.760	1.760	
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1550	2232	1.440	1.440	
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	650	1495	2.310	2.300	
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MACHINERY	300	231	0.770	0.770	
ARAB CENTER FOR FOOD & CHEMICALS	100	264	2.620	2.640	
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	7600	31366	4.130	4.130	
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	12250	25618	2.090	2.100	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR		60238	210896	INDEX NUMBER: 123.76 CHANGE: +0.08%	
GRAND TOTAL		150171	426216	INDEX NUMBER: 143.66 CHANGE: -0.07%	
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET		102788			
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET		127627			

Financial Markets

Jordan Times

In co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 27/2/95	Tokyo Close Date 27/2/95
Sterling Pound*	1.5816	1.5813**
Deutsche Mark	1.4658	1.4662
Swiss Franc	1.2436	1.2418**
French Franc	5.1495	5.1538**
Japanese Yen	97.99	96.93**
European Currency Unit	1.2655	1.2694**

* Unit Per STD

** European Operating for ERM area, GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates

Date: 26/2/1995

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTH	6 MTH	12 MTH
U.S. Dollar	5.81	5.93	6.12	6.50
Sterling Pound	6.25	6.43	6.81	7.50
Deutsche Mark	4.75	4.81	5.00	5.43
Swiss Franc	3.37	3.54	3.81	4.18
French Franc	5.67	6.06	6.30	6.70
Japanese Yen	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.12
European Currency Unit	6.06	6.14	6.46	6.93

Source: Reuters, 26/2/95

Agassi set to dethrone Sampras

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) — Reigning Australian and U.S. Open champion Andre Agassi probably will achieve his dream of ranking number one in the tennis world in March. But passing Pete Sampras and staying ahead of him are two very different things.

Second-ranked Agassi could move ahead of his compatriot next week at the Champions Cup tournament in Indian Wells, California. Failing that he could move ahead at the Lipton International later in the month.

"Being number one is a reflection of how you do week after week," Agassi said. "I plan on playing my best. It comes down to who ever executes better."

Agassi will have his chance at both events. Should Agassi dethrone Sampras in either, however, the ATP points system makes it likely he will take the number one spot for the first time in his career.

"I don't want to be number one because I beat some kind of system," Agassi said. "If Pete is ranked ahead of me, the bottom line is I want to play him."

Sampras, who has owned the top spot for 18 months, is on the defensive because he won Lipton and the Champions Cup last year while Agassi was recovering from wrist surgery. Agassi can make big gains unless Sampras defends his title.

"Agassi is playing very good tennis," Sampras admitted. "He won the last two Grand Slams. But what is important to me is to be number one on December 31."

Agassi must build a big ATP points lead by July because he will be on the defensive after Wimbledon. Agassi must defend titles at the U.S. Open, Toronto, Vienna and Paris won during a time when



Andre Agassi lifts the Australian Open trophy

Sampras was suffering with tendinitis.

"The reason I had such a big lead is I have been pretty consistent," said Sampras, the first man who stay number one for a year since Ivan Lendl did it in 1987.

"I haven't played many bad matches and I have won a lot of those. That's the difference."

Sampras has won seven of 13 career meetings with Agassi, but lost the most recent at the Australian Open final. Their battle for the top will dominate the year and could match the Bjorn Borg-John McEnroe rivalry for intensity.

"Andre and I can turn this

into something pretty special," Sampras said. "Our games, personalities and lifestyles are so different. Hopefully this will last five or six years, the way Borg and McEnroe did."

Their rivalry will probably be at its most intense at the French Open. The Paris crown is the only Grand Slam title neither has won and Agassi plans to spend two months in Europe after the Lipton in training for the red clay event.

Both players struggled at the U.S. Indoors here.

Sampras was ill and ousted in the second round. Agassi suffered a surprise and often bad-tempered semi-final loss to eventual champion Tho-

mas Enqvist of Sweden.

"I can't expect to win every match I play," Agassi said. "It's not easy with everybody coming at you. You're going to lose some. To be disappointed about reaching the semi-finals here is losing a little perspective."

Agassi has come to value perspective, something he lacked in the days when he cavalierly skipped the Australian Open and Wimbledon. But the wrist injury that tumbled him down to 32nd in the world taught rebel Agassi there was more to life than style.

"I sat there with the wrist healing, feeling like my career might be over," Agassi said. "I wished I had tapped my potential more, played my best all the time. I wished I had done everything to be the best player possible and I knew I hadn't. I decided if I recovered, I would be all those things."

That was a year ago. Now Agassi has won 37 of his past 40 matches and is on target to achieve his potential.

"I fought a lot of ghosts between tennis and myself," Agassi said. "Things came so easy for me and I didn't have an appreciation of what hard work would accomplish. I was just having fun, and making commercials and all of that. Now I understand."

Agassi has also found love in the arms of actress-model Brooke Shields, who took a night off from Broadway to watch Agassi here.

"Brooke is an incredible person," Agassi said. "She has an incredible capacity to love. Her belief in me has been amazing. We have helped each other. We probably would have succeeded anyway but we have added a lot to each other. It's so great waking up in the morning and finding her feeling the same way about me."

Pacers defeat Celtics 108-97

BOSTON (AP) — Rik Smits scored 25 points, Reggie Miller added 24 and Mark Jackson had 17 assists Monday night as the Indiana Pacers extended their winning streak to seven games with a 108-97 victory over the Boston Celtics.

Smits' dunk with 5:38 to play capped an 8-2 run and gave the Pacers a 96-79 lead. Boston came back with a 12-4 run, keyed by consecutive 3-pointers by Dee Brown, and was within 100-91 with 2:01 left.

A 3-pointer by Xavier McDaniel with 1:18 left cut the Pacers' lead to 103-96, but Indiana closed the game with a 5-1 run, all of the points coming on free throws.

Dominique Wilkins came off the bench to lead the Celtics with 23 points, while Brown, Sherman Douglas and Eric Montross each scored 15.

Pistons 97, Bucks 89: In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Rafael Addison scored 12 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter, and Detroit held off Milwaukee to match its victory total for all of last season.

Detroit blew a 16-point lead, but pulled it out in the fourth quarter for its eighth win in nine home games. It was the 20th win of the season for the Pistons, who also got 20 points from Allan Houston and 18 from rookie Grant Hill.

The Bucks, who got 24 points from Todd Day and 18 from rookie Glenn Robinson, helped Detroit by missing 14 of 43 free throws.

Hawks 118, Kings 99: In Atlanta, Andrew Lang scored a season-high 20 points and had eight rebounds to lead Atlanta.

It was the third straight win for the Hawks and seventh in their last nine games. The 8-4 record for February made it their first winning month of the season. The Kings are mired in a season-worst five-game losing streak.

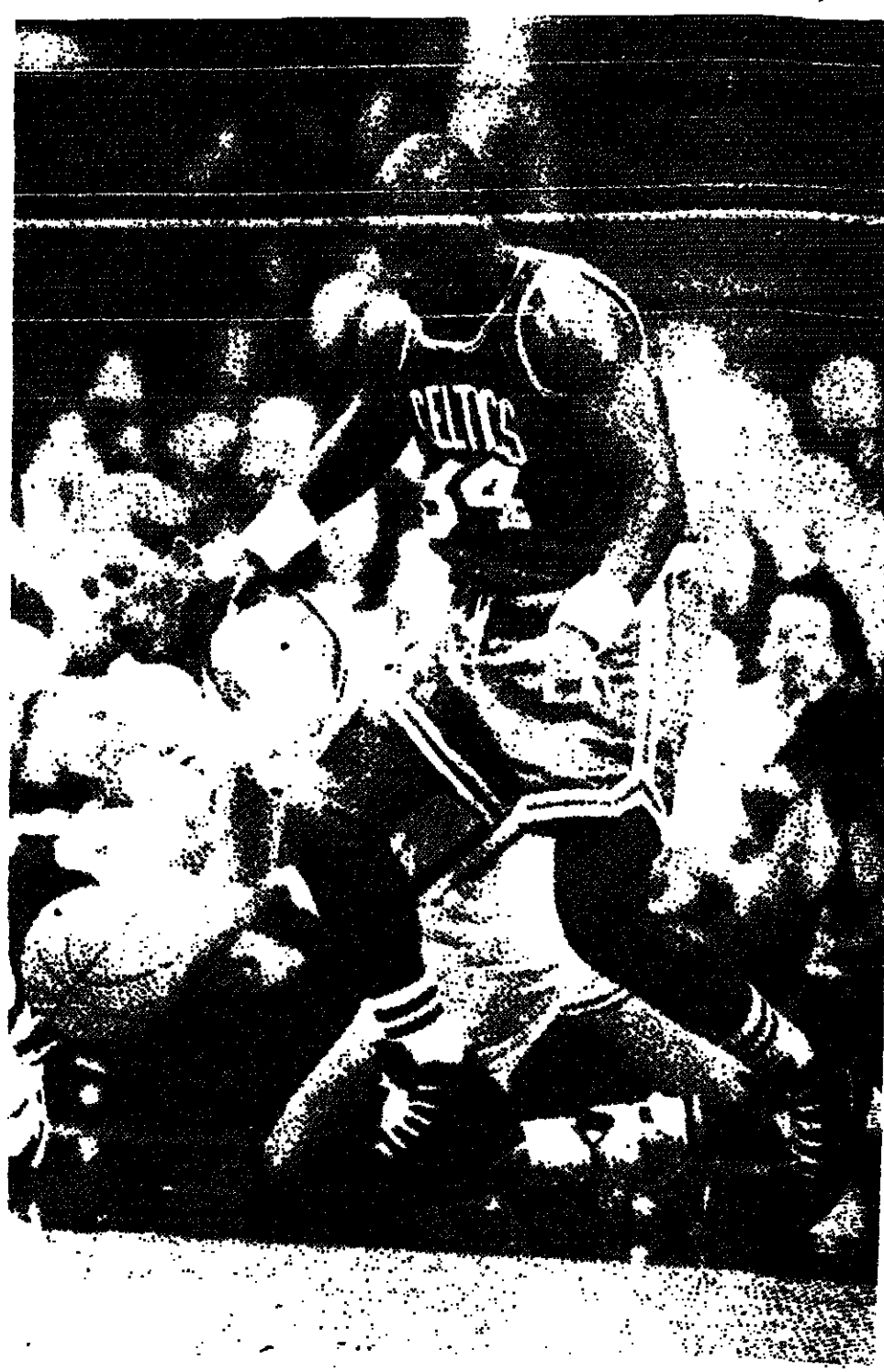
Grant Long added 20 points for the Hawks. Mookie Blaylock 19, Stacey Augmon 18, Ken Norman 16 and Steve Smith 12.

Bulls 108, Nets 96: In Chicago, Scottie Pippen scored 31 points and Luc Longley sparked a 19-0 first-half run for Chicago, which avenged one of its most bitter losses of the season.

Derrick Coleman scored 17 points for the Nets, losers of four of five games. New Jersey's starting backcourt of Kenny Anderson and Chris Morris each shot 1-of-8 from the floor. Anderson added seven turnovers.

The Bulls had won 19 consecutive home games against New Jersey before frittering away a 19-point halftime lead and losing 99-94 on Dec. 5.

Rockets 86, Cavaliers 78: In Houston, Clyde Drexler scored all 16 of his points in the second half. Drexler, who missed all seven of his shots in the first half, finally connected with 9:40 left in the third quarter to put Houston ahead 42-40. The Rockets



Miami Heat forward Brad Lohaus (left) and Boston Celtics' Xavier McDaniel scramble for a loose ball in their NBA game (AP photo)

never trailed again.

Terrell Brandon, who had 26 points for Cleveland, kept the Cavaliers close with 12 points in the third quarter, including a 3-pointer at the buzzer. Then he scored six of Cleveland's first eight points in the final period to pull the Cavaliers within 69-67 with just under six minutes to go.

But baskets by Hakeem Olajuwon and Drexler helped pull Houston away. Trail Blazers 96, Clippers 83: In Portland, Oregon, James Robinson scored 18 points and Buck Williams added 17 points and 13 rebounds as Portland beat Los Angeles for the fifth time this season.

Pooh Richardson had 14 points to lead the Clippers, and Tony Massenburg had 13 points and 10 rebounds.

Playing without Clifford Robinson and Rod Strickland, who sat out the game with injuries, the Blazers started Terry Porter for the first time this year and the veteran guard responded with 15 points and a season-high nine assists. Hornets 116, SuperSonics 114: In Tacoma, Washington, Alonzo Mourning had 34

points and Muggie Bogues scored four of Charlotte's last five points as the Hornets won their first game as they reached the halfway point of a six-game western road trip. Bogues' basket put the Hornets up 113-112 with 1:35 left and Gary Payton's free throw tied it 113-113 with 50 seconds left.

Mourning's free throw with 31 seconds left put the Hornets ahead to stay at 115-113. Bogues made two free throws with 4.7 seconds left for a three-point lead.

Jazz 101, Lakers 95: In Inglewood, California, Karl Malone had 30 points and 10

rebounds as Utah became the only NBA team to reach 40 wins each of the last 12 seasons.

John Stockton had 19 points and 14 assists in Utah's 18th road victory, which tied Phoenix for the most in the NBA, and increased their Midwest Division lead to two games over the idle San Antonio Spurs. The Jazz finished February with a 7-6 record, following their 14-1 mark in January. Eddien Campbell led Los Angeles with 25 points and Vladi Divac had 16 points and 11 rebounds.

RESULTS

Atlanta	118	Sacramento	99
Indiana	108	Boston	97
Detroit	97	Milwaukee	87
Chicago	108	New Jersey	78
Houston	86	Cleveland	86
Portland	96	LA Clippers	83
Charlotte	116	Seattle	114
Utah	101	LA Lakers	95

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Tomba to be witness in trial

ROME (R) — Alpine skiing star Alberto Tomba has been called to appear as a defence witness at the trial of a man accused of holding up an exclusive Milanese jeweller's shop. Italian newspapers reported on Tuesday that Tomba is Pino Rebuscini, a Milan-based Sicilian who says he is a former acquaintance of the triple Olympic champion. The prosecution alleges that Rebuscini accompanied the unwitting Tomba to the exclusive carter shop in Milan and used the diversion created by the ski star's presence to "case the joint." He then, it is alleged, raided the shop, in April 1991.

Reds sign 48-year-old pitcher

PLANT CITY, Florida (AP) — Pedro Borbon, who began his U.S. Major League Baseball career in 1969 and later became a relief pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds signed with the team on Monday at age 48. Borbon has not pitched in the majors since 1980. His son, Pedro Borbon Jr., is a pitcher in the Atlanta Braves' organization. The Reds, fearing defections of Minor League players who won't break ranks from the striking Players' Union, want to make sure they'll have a full roster when they open the exhibition season Thursday against Cleveland. Borbon checked into camp Monday afternoon and was joined by Reds owner Marge Schott, who was making her annual spring visit to the Plant City training complex.

Players, owners meet on 200th day of strike

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona (AP) — Striking baseball players and owners resumed talks Monday, the 200th day of the U.S. Major League baseball strike that began on Aug. 12. Acting commissioner Bud Selig met away from the formal meeting site on Monday morning with Union Head Donald Fehr and mediator W.J. Utery as the sides tried to work out a schedule for the negotiations. Selig and Fehr met for two days last week in Milwaukee, establishing the groundwork for these talks.

Mourners bid farewell to Perry

LONDON (R) — More than 100 family and close friends attended the funeral service on Monday of Fred Perry, the last British man to win a Wimbledon singles title. The Rev. Martin Morgan, vicar of St. Margaret's Church in Rottingdean, east Sussex, told the congregation the three-times Wimbledon champion had not only been a skillful player but a gentleman. With torrential rain falling outside, the vicar added: "I guess there will be laughter in heaven. Can there be a more Wimbledon day than this?" Perry died in Melbourne earlier this month at the age of 85, following a fall in his hotel bedroom.

Cantona's victim charged

LONDON (R) — The London soccer fan who was on the receiving end of a kung-fu style kick from Manchester United star Eric Cantona last month was charged on Monday with inciting the attack, police said. Matthew Simmons, 20, charged with using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour likely to cause immediate unlawful violence by another person. He was also charged with using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress. Simmons, a window insulation fitter, was released on bail and will appear in court again on March 24.

Injury blow for Auxerre

AUXERRE (AFP) — Auxerre's Algerian international midfielder Moussa Saib has pulled out of the European Cup Winners' Cup quarter-final with Arsenal at Highbury on Thursday. Saib sprained his ankle in last Friday's 0-0 draw away to Lille and failed a fitness test on Tuesday. Auxerre coach Guy Roux, who prefers Manchester United's passing game to what he sees as Arsenal's more traditional British style, excused captain Corentin Martins (Gronin) and Dutch defender Franck Verlaat (thigh) training on Tuesday.

Graf will not lose any sleep in rankings battle

PARIS (AFP) — Steffi Graf expects to lose her world number-one status to Arantza Sanchez again this week — but she won't be losing any sleep over it.

She has made it clear that computer rankings don't count for much as far as she is concerned and that her main ambition is to win more Grand Slam titles.

The 25-year-old, five-time Wimbledon champion, who made a triumphant return to the women's tour after a three-month injury lay-off by winning the French Indoor Open in Paris eight days ago and whose next tournament appearance will be at Delray Beach on March 6, said: "Getting back to number-one ranking I lost was nice. But it can all change again this week."

"I just don't have enough tournaments so it's not something I shall lose any sleep over."

Sanchez, who took over from Graf as world number one for the first time on Feb. 6, reigned for just two weeks before the German recaptured her crown.

But the 24-year-old Barcelona battler is top-see at this week's \$430,000 event at Indian Wells and will almost certainly find herself back on top of the rankings by next Monday.

Graf, who has admitted that she will be nursing a serious back injury for the rest of her playing days, dis-



German Steffi Graf (left) and French Mary Pierce smile holding their trophies at the Paris Open earlier this month (AFP photo)

pelled a lot of doubts about her future when she won her 87th career singles title in the French capital by beating world number three Mary Pierce.

Not only did she have the satisfaction of inflicting a severe 6-2, 6-2 defeat on France's Canadian-born Australian Open champion — but she completed the tournament with no discomfort from the bone spur in the lower back which only surgery can remove.

"The back injury is something I have to learn to live with," shrugged Graf. "Hav-

ing an operation would keep me out of tennis for nearly a year and I can't afford that at this stage of my career — especially since there is no guarantee surgery would be successful. The doctors have told me that I cannot make the injury any worse than it already is by playing."

During her remarkable week in Paris, Graf underlined her appetite for the game in which she has been a dominating force since her historic 1988 "Grand Slam" (the year she won all four major tournaments and the Olympic gold medal), by

notching up her 22nd career win over world number-five Jana Novotna and also handing out a straight-sets tennis lesson to Switzerland's Czech-born 14-year-old prodigy Martina Hingis.

"I certainly didn't expect to do so well after all the frustrations and last minute withdrawals from tournaments," said Graf, adding: "I arrived in Paris with too many negative thoughts, but fortunately they all disappeared as soon as I started playing."

Graf is currently undergoing intensive training in Florida with Swiss coach Heinz Gunthard.

"I still need a couple more weeks of good training to feel really right," she said, adding: "Paris was a vital first step. But I still need to play three weeks of consecutive tournament tennis to get back into my normal rhythm."

"Obviously the most important thing to me is my health and at the moment I have no problems and I'm really excited to be playing again. But I shall be taking it one tournament at a time."

"What I really want to be able to play the other Grand Slam events this year."

Apart from her five Wimbledon crowns Graf has also won three Australian, three French, and three U.S. Open singles titles.

Chang makes his move for the top

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) — Michael Chang jumped fourth place in the latest ATP Tour rankings this week, matching the career best he attained in 1992, and immediately made it clear that he feels he can go all the way to the top.

"I feel like number one is within my reach — but I have to work at it," Chang said.

Chang leaped past Croatia's big-serving Goran Ivanisevic and Spain's Sergi Bruguera in the rankings, despite losing here in Sunday's United States Indoor final to Sweden's Thomas Enqvist 6-0, 4-6, 0-6.

Chang's other 1995 final also ended in a three-set loss in San Jose two weeks ago to Australian and U.S. Open champion Andre Agassi.

But the Chinese American player intends to set the record straight and he has made the second ranked Agassi, world number-one Pete Sampras, and number three Boris Becker as special targets.

"These are the guys I will be competing against for Grand Slam titles the rest of our careers and I want to be able to beat them on a regular

basis, not just once in a while," he said.

Chang's only Grand Slam victory came in the 1989 French open crown when, at the age of 17, he beat Sweden's Stefan Edberg in five-sets.

The closest he has come to a major title since then came at last month's Australian Open where he was beaten in the semi-finals.

"I have had a taste before and now I want the whole meal," said Chang, adding: "I have started the year off

on a good note, but I don't want to be satisfied with that. I want to win more Grand Slams."

Chang, who was 23 last week, won titles last year in Jakarta, Hong Kong, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Beijing and Philadelphia.

"I'm looking for opportunities and hoping to take advantage when they come," he said. "To win a Grand Slam, a lot of it is to peak well, be physically fit and on your best game."

Chang has an overall ATP

ATP men's tennis rankings on Monday.

1. Pete Sampras (USA) 4776 pts
2. Andre Agassi (USA) 4017
3. Boris Becker (Germany) 3251
4. Michael Chang (USA) 2697
5. Sergi Bruguera (Spain) 2619
6. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia) 2500
7. Yevgeni Kafelnikov (Russia) 2491
8. Alberto Berasategui (Spain) 2488
9. Michael Stich (Germany) 2467

10. Richard Krajicek (Neth) 2045
11. Wayne Ferreira (S. Africa) 1937
12. Todd Martin (USA) 1872
13. Jim Courier (USA) 1837
14. Andrei Medvedev (Ukraine) 1815
15. Stefan Edberg (Sweden) 1750
16. Magnus Larsson (Sweden) 1738
17. Marc Rosset (Switz) 1534
18. Andrea Gaudenzi (Italy) 1439
19. Thomas Muster (Austria) 1423
20. Patrick Rafter (Australia) 1285



Michael Chang

record of 351 victories to 138 defeats. So far this year he has won 15 of 19 encounters and pocketed \$185,781 in

prizemoney while he remains highly popular in Asia where last season he notched up 24 wins from 27 matches.

Louganis says he has 'plenty of living to do'

NEW YORK (AP) — The day after Greg Louganis went public with his story of living with AIDS, his mother met an acquaintance who had seen the Olympic diver's television interview.

"The woman told my mom her daughter had committed suicide after learning she was HIV-positive," Louganis said Monday. "She said she wished her daughter had lived long enough to hear what I had to say."

Louganis' message is stark and simple. "With an HIV diagnosis, there's still plenty of living to do," he said. "You can still accomplish goals and make a difference."

Embarking on a 20-city tour to publicise his autobiography, "Breaking the Surface," Louganis looks and feels fine. He is tanned and relaxed, more relaxed, he said, than he can ever remember. "I have come to terms with this," he said. "I'm comfortable with where I'm at."

That was not always the case. When Louganis first tested positive for HIV in early 1988, he kept the news to himself. At the time, in the months before Seoul Olympics, it made sense. "I was easier for me to focus on diving," he said. "Who wants to focus on HIV?"

So he kept the secret, even from his coach, Ron O'Brien. Preparations for the Olympics were at a crucial stage and Louganis said he thought the news might cause O'Brien to let up on him.

Eventually, however, the pressure became too much and Louganis told O'Brien his secret. "It was too difficult to keep to myself, he said, 'you're not getting off the hook that easily.'"

"You don't realise how powerful secrets can be," Louganis said. "I dreaded speaking engagements. I had to always watch what I said. I couldn't tell the whole story."

When Louganis hit his head on the platform in a preliminary dive at Seoul, his scalp was cut. As Dr. Jim Puffer, unaware of Louganis' HIV status and not wearing gloves, stitched the wound, the diver's mind raced. Should he tell the doctor about his condition? Should he continue with the competition?

"It scared me," he said. "All I could do was sob." He never told Puffer until years after the Olympics regrets that now. "I probably should have told him of my HIV status then," he said. "Hindsight is 20-20. But I was drained and dazed. You're not thinking properly."

"I made assumptions that were not accurate. I thought that Dr. Puffer would be tested routinely."

When Louganis began work on his book, it changed quickly from another sports biography to a confession of his condition. That was when he contacted the doctor. Puffer, who tested negative for HIV, was concerned only that the diver was getting appropriate treatment and medication.

Telling his story has been a catharsis for Louganis, who often quotes the biblical phrase, "the truth will set you free."

Louganis continues to work out and does some acting. He raises and trains great Danes and has a summer schedule full of dog shows. "I'm going ahead with things," he said. "The message is to hate AIDS, not life."

It may be banned, but Pakistanis like a flutter

KARACHI (R) — Outlawed though it may be, Pakistanis are certainly fond of a flutter.

Take the Karachi Stock Exchange where a big game involving the national team can have ordinary trade.

When Pakistan met Holland in the World Cup hockey final in December, brokers and agents deserted the floor for the first hour of the session until news of Pakistan's victory came in.

Brokers say bets totalling tens of millions of rupees (millions of dollars) are placed on major sports events at the bourse, perhaps the only venue in the city where betting goes on in a semi-organised, if clandestine manner.

"It was not just for love of hockey that these people left the floor. They had stakes on the game," one dealer said. "There is money involved in anything that happens here."

"It's an open secret, which nobody minds. In fact we enjoy it," said the dealer, who asked not to be named.

Crowds of 200 to 300 people gather outside the exchange building to bet on

big matches. Cricket games in which Pakistan is playing provide the biggest thrills for the punters.

"From the final result of a match, to how many runs Saleem Malik makes in his innings, or the number of runs Wasim Akram gives away in an over, bets can be placed from over to over," dealer Iqbal Jan Mohammad said.

"The results are so dramatic it is hard to believe. And most of the time they go in favour of the bookies," he added.

Brokers said people fix percentages in bets or even start hedging as the match heads towards its climax. Stakes, sometimes hundreds of rupees, sometimes thousands or even millions, fluctuate like share prices.

A KSE official said trading in speculative issues slows markedly when a cricket match is played during trading hours.

"The reason is obvious. The speculators are taking positions in the game," he remarked.

"Private betting is nothing new. The stock exchange isn't the only place in Karachi where it happens and it has nothing to

do with the exchange," KSE president Sirajuddin Cassim said.

"But we do not allow it inside the compound. When people started betting inside the compound four years back, we got the police to remove them," he said.

"Now people gather outside in the evening. The bigger the event, the more they get involved and the bigger the stakes. They listen to the match commentary, place bets and enjoy themselves," Cassim said.

There are no betting counters or official bookies, but the betting is organised inside and outside the exchange with a professional touch by the agents of two KSE members, according to brokers who asked not to be named.

Three months ago police rounded up dozens of gamblers outside the exchange, but things were back to normal within a week.

"Speculators love to bet on anything that comes along," a dealer said. "And cricket, a game of glorious uncertainties, provides them a perfect pitch on which they love to play."

McClellan's prognosis improves

LONDON (AP) — As Gerald McClellan's chances of survival improved Tuesday, British boxing officials dismissed appeals for the sport to be banned and called for a world body to supervise safety in boxing.

McClellan remained in critical but stable condition on a life support machine at Royal London Hospital, where he had a large blood clot removed from his brain after being stopped by Nigel Benn in a WBC super-middleweight title fight Saturday night.

John Sutcliffe, the neurosurgeon who performed the operation early Sunday, said "his chance of survival improves with every hour that passes."

"We think he will now survive," Sutcliffe said. "Hopefully we will get him through it — and at the end of the day get him through it in good condition."

The surgeon said it was too early to determine whether McClellan would suffer long-term brain damage or disabilities, but that his boxing career was over.

Members of McClellan's family — mother Stacey McClellan, girlfriend Angela Brown, aunt Linda Shorter and sister Stacey Caeen — visited the boxer's bedside Monday after flying in from the United States.

"He is in very capable hands and I am cautiously optimistic he will be all right," said promoter Don King, who spent an hour with the family at the hospital.

McClellan collapsed in his corner after being counted out in the 10th round of what was widely described by the British media as the most brutal fight ever seen in the country.

The tragedy triggered fresh demands for boxing to be banned, a campaign that has been led for years by the British Medical Association.

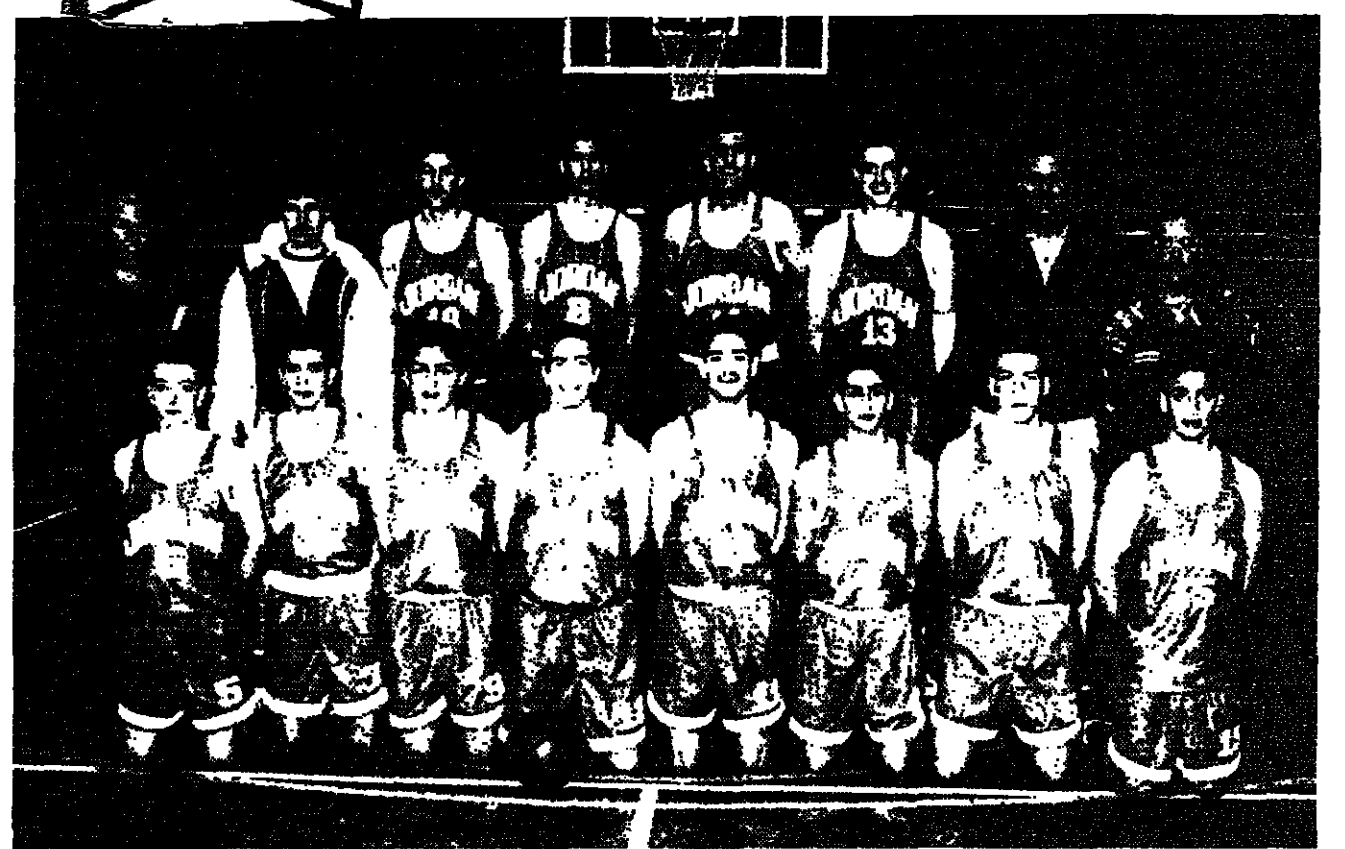
But the British boxing community called a news conference Monday to defend the sport and its safety procedures.

"You'll never silence the critics," said John Morris, general secretary of the British Boxing Board of Control. "I think the sport has to go on the front foot...I just want boxing to be treated as another risk sport."

King said "if you followed those people who say if one bad thing happens in a sport you ban it, then we wouldn't have any sport at all."

Morris and fight promoter Frank Warren said the sport had improved its medical safeguards, noting that an anaesthetist, four doctors, two sets of paramedics and two ambulances were on site for Saturday's fight at the London arena. The immediate treatment McClellan received was credited with saving his life.

"What happened Saturday night and the measures we had at ringside is probably the best you could get other than having an operating theatre at ringside," Warren said.



Jordan's U-18 basketball team

Jordan's U-18 basketball team leaves for Manila today

JBF to apply to host Asian U-22 tourney in '96

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — They are all set and packed. They have practised well. Twelve matches put them in the mood for real competition. In a matter of days they also became well known to Jordanian sports fans. Now they have to fulfil everyone's expectations. And they maintain they are ready.

The Kingdom's Under-18 national basketball team leaves the capital for the Philippines today (Wednesday) to take part in the 13th Asian Youth Basketball Championship which will be held in Manila, March 3-11.

Fifteen teams will be competing for the trophy and the top three positions who will represent Asia in the world championship due to be held in Greece, July 12-22.

Jordan will be playing in Group B alongside South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Group A includes China, Thailand, Malaysia and Brunei.

Group C has only three teams left after Iran pulled out. They are the Philippines, Indonesia, and Macao.

Group D includes Japan, Taiwan, Kazakhstan and India.

The top two teams in each group will advance to the quarterfinals.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, the team's

head coach Murad Barakat voiced optimism in the team's upcoming performance at the matches and stressed that this group of players would, in time, be a team to be reckoned with.

"I expect that this promising group of young players will be the ones to take Jordanian basketball to new heights and remind fans of the glories of past national teams," Mr. Barakat said alluding to the time when Jordan was at the top of Arab basketball, when he was captain of the senior team during the early eighties.

Mr. Barakat said the team was "as ready as it could be" and said he expected Jordan would make it to the quarterfinals and hopefully to the semifinals.

"The players are giving it all they have. Despite the fact that they had only two months to prepare, we tried to make use of every single day. The basketball federation (JBF) was also very cooperative and provided every possible backing," he added.

The JBF tried to make the team's preparations as efficient as possible, and probably for the first time, the national teams coaches made use of 12 official matches to test the team's preparedness.

After a month's practice the team had a training camp in Syria where they played a host of top clubs. The Jordanian team beat Al Thawra

48-75 and Al Shurta 80-47, but lost 70-69 and 63-52 to Al Jeish and 81-70 to Syrian champions Al Wihdeh.

The team also represented Mercedes in the All-Star Tournament which was recently concluded. In addition, three matches against Iraqi runners up Al Naft put the finishing touches on the team's preparations.

In the final match Jordan beat Al Naft 95-91 (55-40) in a game attended by over 300 fans at Al Orthodox court.

Al Naft had won the first two encounters 69-68 (31-26), and 82-74 (45-38). The team's stars Zeid Alkhas and Mahmoud Sha'ban were the top scorers.

Taking into consideration that the JBF also has the men's and women's Asian championships on its agenda, which will altogether cost a minimum JD 50,000 while it has only JD 12,000 as a budget allocated by the Ministry of Youth, sponsors of the All-Star Tournament have contributed to enable the U-18 team to take part.

"We do not have a single sponsor, and are very grateful to the All-Star sponsors — Mercedes, Hyundai, Toyota, Citroen and Mitsubishi and Gulf Express — for their encouragement and understanding," JBF Chairman Awwad Haddad told the Jordan Times.

He said the Opel company had also undertaken to sponsor local activities for the

second consecutive year, and that the Amman Chamber of Commerce was also very cooperative.

Jordan's delegation to the Philippines is headed by JBF Vice Chairman Samir Janakat and includes coaches Murad Barakat and Imad Al Saeed, team Manager Ghaleb Balawi, referee Ismail Harb, Physician Mazen Bitar and journalist Omar Bashrawi.

The team includes Zeid Alkhas, Ma'an Odeh, Ashraf Samarah, Mahmoud Sha'ban, Samer Nino, Yanal Bishah, Ihab Msh, Ra'ed Ghosheh, Adel Ammari, Ramzi Ghneim, Fadi Saqqa and Seif Lada'a.

Jordan will play Hong Kong Friday evening, Singapore Saturday afternoon and Korea Sunday.

During the championships in Manila, the Asian Basketball Confederation, of which Mr. Haddad is vice-president, will also hold its regular meetings.

Mr. Janakat Tuesday told the Jordan Times that Jordan would apply to hold the Asian Under-22 championship in Amman in 1996 after the capital hosts the Arab U-22 competition in April '96.

Holding these two tournaments in Amman would be a big achievement for the JBF and the U-22 team which includes some of the country's top players.

Auguin wins 3rd leg of BOC race

PUNTA DEL ESTE, Uruguay (AP) — Christophe Auguin of France won the third leg of the BOC round-the-world solo yacht race on Monday, beating his nearest rival by more than a day.

Auguin, the defending champion, sailed the nearly 11,200 kilometres stretch from Sydney, Australia, to Uruguay in 29 days, 16 hours, 15 minutes and 57 seconds, race officials said. He arrived in this seaside resort about noon est (1700 GMT).

Since Auguin also won the second leg — from Cape Town, South Africa, to Sydney — he has built up a nearly insurmountable lead over the 12 other sailors still competing.

Jean Luc Van Den Heede, also from France, was second, at least 480 kilometres behind Auguin, and 72 kilometres further back was Steve Pettengill of the United States.

Van Den Heede and Pettengill were expected to arrive on Tuesday. In class II, for boats under 15 metres, Italy's Giovanni Soldini had closed to within 27 kilometres of leader David Adams of Australia.

Australian skipper Alan Vebauer, meanwhile, was lashed late Sunday during a storm with 40-knot winds some 1,017 kilometres off Cape Horn, South America. Prior to the breakdown, he had been in fourth place in class II.

Bailey surprises Christie in 60-metre final

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Donovan Bailey put on his spikes for the first time only four years ago. Now, the late-bloomer has a victory over 100-metre Olympic and world champion Linford Christie.

"Not bad. I didn't know he started so late," said Christie after losing the 60-metre final to Bailey by one-hundredth of a second in the DN Games track meet Monday night, the final of the inaugural \$150,000 European four-meet indoor series.

"You can't win everything. Donovan ran well. He beat me. The thing about the sport is you never know how it's going to go. He was behind me on Saturday, I was behind him today. That's just life."

Bailey, 26, born in Jamaica like Christie, won the race in 6.57 seconds, one hundredth faster than two days ago in Birmingham, England, when he was fourth in his first European meet of the season.

"I wasn't surprised that I won," said Bailey, who bettered American Dennis Mitchell's meet record from last year by .04 seconds. "I've been consistent all year. But I got hurt (hamstring) early in the season, so it was hard to come back and run a good race in Birmingham."

Bailey, who resides in Oakville, Ontario, started training in track in 1992, but didn't begin serious competition until last year.

"My present coach, Dan Pfaff from LSU, whom I met in the 1993 worlds at Stuttgart, Germany, when I represented Canada in the 400-metre relay, told me I had the

tools to be a world champion or break the world record.

"I didn't believe him, of course. But I was ranked eighth in the world outdoor in the 100 last year and this year, if I stay healthy, things will be better I hope."

Bailey, lanky and tall like Christie, knew he had won Monday's race at Stockholm's Globe Arena despite the close finish.

"I knew it at once," he said. "I looked over and there was no one beside me. And I saw it on the jumbotron right after the race."

Bailey, who competed in Sweden for the first time, thinks he can be a force in the sprints during the outdoor season.

Bailey didn't run the 100 metres in last year's Commonwealth Games in Canada, but he was a member of the winning Canadian 400-metre relay team. In the 1993 worlds, he ran one leg on the Canadian team that got a bronze medal.

Double European outdoor sprint champion Irina Privolova of Russia won her third straight 60-metre race in the series at 7.07.

Venuste Niyongabo of Burundi clocked the second-fastest indoor time ever in the 1,000 metres, missing Noureddine Morelli's world record by only .36 seconds. But he got no cash prize, only appearance money, because the race was not part of the series.

Niyongabo's winning time was 2:15.62 Morelli, who set the world record of 2:15.26 two years ago, was not entered.

Jansen wins America's top amateur athlete award

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Speedskater Dan Jansen, whose Olympic frustrations ended last year with a gold medal at the Lillehammer Games, Monday night won the Sullivan Award, given to the top amateur in the United States.

It was the second consecutive year Jansen was a finalist for the award, which an athlete can only win once.

Jansen was accompanied to the Indiana Convention Center with his parents, four sisters and two brothers. He is the 65th Sullivan Award winner.

The 29-year-old skater was selected from among 10 finalists who were chosen from a list of 53 athletes named by the national bodies of their sport.

Jansen is the third speedskater to win the award, joining Eric Heiden and Bonnie Blair. Track and field athletes have dominated the selection with 36 winners. Swimming is a distant second with nine winners.

Jansen, who was competed in Olympics, was selected for

his 1994 accomplishments, which included a world record of 1 minute, 12.43 seconds in the 1,000-metre event at the Lillehammer Olympics.

He also won the 1994 World Sprint Championship and swept the 500, 1,000 and 1,500 metre events at the U.S. Olympic trials. But, voters undoubtedly considered his heartbreaking efforts in

the 1988 Olympics when he fell twice during races as he tried to compete shortly after his sister died of Leukemia.

Bruce Baumgartner was a finalist for the fourth time after a year in which he raised his total of wrestling medals won in world and Olympic competition to 11 — only one short of the sport's record set by Alexander Medved of the former Soviet Union.

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Israel-PLO trade accord limits Jordan-Palestine options — Abul Ragheb

By Natasha Bukhari
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The list of products that are allowed to be imported customs-free from Jordan and Egypt into the Palestinian self-rule areas under the Palestinian-Israeli trade agreement constrains an envisaged free trade agreement between Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Trade and Industry Minister Ali Abul Ragheb said Tuesday.

"We feel that the lists are discriminatory and pose an obstacle to the free trade agreement we are looking into implementing between Jordan and the Palestinian authority," Mr. Abul Ragheb told the Jordan Times in an interview.

The minister added that a formula stated in the trade agreement between the Palestinians and Israel regulating the local input of the products exported to the Palestinian Authority is "unfair or internationally applicable."

During talks between Jordanian and PNA officials on trade relations, PNA officials recognised the need for renegotiating their trade agreement with Israel which is restrictive to the Palestinians, Jordan and Egypt, Mr. Abul Ragheb stressed.

Under the Palestinian-Israeli trade agreement, both parties are allowed to renegotiate any article in the accord which might require modification in due time.

Mr. Abul Ragheb said that a trilateral Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli meeting may be held to address the constraints of each party's trade accord with Israel and find a formula by which the requirements of all parties concerned are accommodated.



Ali Abul Ragheb

is part of the Israeli custom area, Mr. Abul Ragheb stressed the necessity for the Palestinians to reach a solution by which they are treated as an equal party rather than a subordinate to Israel in terms of trade relations with any third party.

"Economy is the main ingredient for the sustenance of peace. Therefore it is important for the Palestinians to sit down and discuss their trade accord with the Israelis to reach an agreement that guarantees them rights equal to any other trade partner of Israel's," he said.

Meanwhile, Jordan, which is now negotiating a trade agreement with Israel, has submitted a list of goods to fall under preferential treatment in the form of customs reductions.

"The Israelis responded that they were ready to look into this issue and the two sides are still negotiating towards reaching a comprehensive trade accord," Mr. Abul Ragheb said, adding that no agreement on the issue which "requires careful study and deliberation."

The minister noted that "the fact that there is disparity between the Jordanian and the Israeli economy" calls for reaching terms whereby Jordanian products can be as competitive as other countries' products in the Israeli market.

Israel, which is a member of the GATT, has free trade agreements with the Europeans and the U.S.

Jordan's Oct. 26 peace treaty with Israel, having ended a 46-year state of war between the two countries, calls for establishing "normal relations" between them to include economic cooperation.

Noting that the West Bank government.

"The KDP is on good terms with them therefore the KDP did not control the checkpoints properly."

Shazad Said, a spokesman for the PUK, dismissed the charge and repeated earlier assertions that Iraq, cut off from its northern region by Western air power, was behind the attack.

A Turkish press report, meanwhile, suggested the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), fighting for a homeland in southeastern Turkey, planted the explosive.

In Iraq, a U.N. official said 76 people had been killed in the Monday blast in the Kurdish-controlled city but said he had no information on who was to blame.

"It was a pretty heavy car bomb," Potti Dahi, chief of the United Nations Guards Contingent (UNGIC) in Erbil, told Reuters by telephone to Baghdad. "The number of casualties is going up."

He said that on Feb. 11 and Feb. 21 the PUK had sent two car bombs at Salahuddin but that the KDP had managed to defuse them. Mr. Talabani warned two weeks ago the PUK could wage an all-out war against the KDP areas.

But PUK radio hit back saying in a broadcast: "The bomb was sent from the Iraqi

government.

At a minimum Mr. Christopher will pass through Israel, Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, other department sources said earlier. He is also supposed to meet with Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat in Gaza.

Though it is "not a make or break trip," Mr. Christopher believes the tour "can move the process forward," Ms. Shelly said. "Progress may well be slow," Ms. Shelly

added.

Mr. Christopher will also try to resolve the Egyptian-Israeli row over the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) when he visits the Middle East.

Egypt's insistence that Israel sign the anti-nuclear treaty has created one of the sharpest disputes between the two since they signed a peace treaty in 1979. Egypt has promised not to support renewal of the NPT, which comes up in April, unless Israel signs.

Israel has never acknowledged having a nuclear arsenal, but is widely believed to possess about 200 warheads. It has refused to sign the treaty until there is a comprehensive regional peace, citing potential threats from Iran, Iraq and Libya.

A visit to Cairo last week by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres apparently

failed to make headway. Mr. Peres said Egypt was no longer demanding that Israel sign the treaty, but Egyptian officials have denied that any deal was made.

"(Christopher's) visit will focus on the peace process and the signing of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Tuesday.

Mr. Christopher will try to press Syria and Israel into resuming their peace talks, stalled since December over disagreements on an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights (see page 2).

Mr. Christopher will also try to give a boost to the Palestinian autonomy talks, which have stumbled over the redeployment of Israeli troops and delays in holding Palestinian elections in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

The trip will be Mr. Christopher's first to the region since December and Ms. Shelly said the secretary will be consulting with key regional parties about the current status of Arab-Israeli negotiations.

Ms. Shelly acknowledged that the dispute between Israel and Egypt over the NPT is expected to come up during Mr. Christopher's discussions in the region.

"We continue to pursue our objectives on the NPT. That's something which is very strong in the secretary's mind," she said.

"I think there have been fairly intensive efforts between the Israelis and the Egyptians to work on the issue. It's certainly not my impression, based on their statements so far that they've reached a final conclusion about how they can bridge their differences," Ms. Shelly said.

Crown Prince underlines need to define national priorities in 1995

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Tuesday hosted an iftar at the Hussein Youth City for representatives of the economic and social institutions in refugee camps, administration officials and deputies from Amman, Balqa, Irbid and Madaba governorates.

Addressing the audience, Prince Hassan called on them to support and rally behind national unity and take part in defining Jordan's cause and priorities in 1995, based on the slogan His Majesty King Hussein has always upheld "Man is our dearest resource."

Prince Hassan said Jordan boasts of having introduced the new humanitarian order ten years ago because Jordan has always been the home of dignity, stability and human rights.

The banquet was attended by Chief Islamic Justice Sheikh Izzeddin Al Khatib Al



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and guests at an iftar he hosted Tuesday perform Al Maghreb prayers (Petra photo)

Tamimi, the Prince's special advisor Mohammad Al Saqqaf, several other advisors of the Crown Prince, the director general of the Palestinian Affairs Department and heads of the information de-

partments.

The atmosphere was casual, and Prince Hassan was moving from one table to another chatting with invitees on issues of common concern.

King honours veteran officials

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday conferred medals of honour on veteran officials, judges and businessmen in appreciation of the services they rendered for the Kingdom.

Former Secretary General of the Meteorology Department Ali Abanda and department official Rafiq Jamil Shaker were decorated with Al Istiklal Medal of the First Order.

The following judges also received Al Istiklal Medal of the First Order: Abdul Karim Mu'ath, Rif'at Shammout, Ali Al Nassan, Abdul Aziz, Ali Saket, Ahmad Al Momani, Tayseer Al Diri and Nayef Saleman.

Businessman Hamdi Al Tabaa was decorated with Al Kawkab Medal of the First Order.

(Continued on page 7)

Teacher banned for practical philosophy lesson

REIMS, France (AFP) — A teacher who put a knife to a pupil's throat to explain the difference between life and death was sentenced to a six-month suspended jail term here and banned from teaching for five years.

Michel Fournier, 46, was giving a philosophy lesson at a school in this northern city when he took out a penknife, unfolded the blade and put it to the throat of a 13-year-old boy, a court here was told. "And now, what happens if I press," Fournier reportedly said.

Father of 2 goes on trial for 38 rapes

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, France (AP) — A 53-year-old father of two went on trial for the rapes of 38 women, only a fraction of the victims he claims to have assaulted during more than 15 years as a serial rapist.

Alain Garcia, a refinery worker, has been jailed since 1988, when he was arrested two days after a young woman was raped in front of her daughter in the southern city of Aix-en-Provence. He confessed to raping more than 100 women starting in the early 1970s.

Police amassed enough evidence to file charges in 38 cases, and also subjected Garcia to extensive medical and psychological tests. He was found to be physically normal and of near-average intelligence. He told interrogators he did not have sexual relations with his sickly wife, who has spent much of their marriage in the hospital.

Most of the rape victims were young women, many of them university students. Some were raped in front of their boyfriends, who were tied up by the assailant. Often, police said, the rapist gained access to victims' apartments by scaling balconies wearing a pair of basketball shoes.

Authorities say Garcia's wife and two grown children have remained loyal to him, regularly visiting him in prison while he awaited trial.

Court ends dictionary fight

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court closed the book on a multimillion-dollar trademark dispute over Webster's Dictionaries. The justices turned down Merriam-Webster's bid to reinstate a \$2 million damage award it won, and then lost, in a lawsuit against rival publisher Random House.

Merriam-Webster publishes Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary. In 1990, Random House introduced a dictionary titled Webster's College Dictionary. Both dictionaries have red dust jackets.

Merriam-Webster sued Random House in 1991 for trademark infringement. A federal jury in New York found that Random House intentionally violated Merriam-Webster's trademark and awarded \$2.2 million in damages. The judge decided the damages award was too high, set it at \$2 million and ordered Random House not to violate the trademark in the future.

An Appellate Court threw out the damages award because it said there was no likelihood that the Random House dust jackets would be mistaken for Merriam-Webster's.

'Giant Iceberg' is no danger to shipping

SYDNEY (R) — A massive iceberg that has broken free from Antarctica will not pose a threat to shipping as ocean currents will push it clockwise around the ice continent, the Australian Antarctic Division said Tuesday.

The iceberg, measuring 78 km by 37 (48 miles by 23 miles) and 200 metres (660 feet) thick, broke off the Larsen Ice Shelf south of Cape Horn sometime in the past few days. "Icebergs generally drift around the continent as the currents are circumpolar," Jo Jacka, head of the division's Glaciology Section, said. "It will probably in time get caught upon the Antarctic peninsula and grounded over shallow water," he told Reuters. "It will stay there for some months or years until it finally gets thinner and it will break into smaller bits."

Kurdish factions trade accusations after bombing

SALAHUDDIN (Agencies) — Rival Kurdish factions traded accusations Tuesday over a devastating car bomb attack which killed 73 civilians and wounded 141 in the northern Iraqi town of Zakho.

Up to 200 kilograms of TNT packed into a red Volkswagen Passat exploded Monday at the busy money exchange market in the dusty frontier town on the border with Turkey.

"Many of the dead were unrecognisable because they were so badly burnt in the blast," said Samir Abdul Rahman, a leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) which controls Zakho.

He said 73 civilians had been killed and 141 wounded in the blast which also destroyed homes, shops and other cars in the town at the main crossing point from Turkey into Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq.

An investigation was launched at the scene Tuesday

but Mr. Abdul Rahman blamed the KDP's rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani, for the unprecedented attack.

The PUK and the KDP, which is headed by veteran Kurdish leader Massud Barzani, have been locked in a bitter power struggle for several months, and part of the conflict is over control of the region's money. The KDP collects lucrative customs duties at the border.

"It was the PUK who did it," Mr. Abdul Rahman charged here, saying the car was registered in PUK-controlled Erbil, the main town in northern Iraq.

He said that on Feb. 11 and Feb. 21 the PUK had sent two car bombs at Salahuddin but that the KDP had managed to defuse them. Mr. Talabani warned two weeks ago the PUK could wage an all-out war against the KDP areas.

But PUK radio hit back saying in a broadcast: "The bomb was sent from the Iraqi

government.

"The KDP is on good terms with them therefore the KDP did not control the checkpoints properly."

Shazad Said, a spokesman for the PUK, dismissed the charge and repeated earlier assertions that Iraq, cut off from its northern region by Western air power, was behind the attack.

A Turkish press report, meanwhile, suggested the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), fighting for a homeland in southeastern Turkey, planted the explosive.

In Iraq, a U.N. official said 76 people had been killed in the Monday blast in the Kurdish-controlled city but said he had no information on who was to blame.

"It was a pretty heavy car bomb," Potti Dahi, chief of the United Nations Guards Contingent (UNGIC) in Erbil, told Reuters by telephone to Baghdad. "The number of casualties is going up."

American and Italian troops consolidate Mogadishu positions

MOGADISHU (AP) — American and Italian troops consolidated positions Tuesday at Mogadishu's air and sea ports as 900 happy, singing Bangladeshi U.N. peacekeepers sailed for home.

The departure of the Bangladeshis left only 1,500 Pakistani peacekeepers to be evacuated by the U.S.-led multinational force that came ashore without incident Monday from a flotilla of warships just off shore.

While Somalia is no closer to order politics than when U.S. troops first landed here 26 months ago, the American commander who took tactical control of the entire operation Tuesday morning said the withdrawal is going well.

"If I had to give you a sports analogy, we've finished the first half," Lieutenant-General Anthony C. Zinni told reporters at mid-morning. "We are well ahead of time."

There is little order to a country that has been without a functional government since former dictator Mohammed Siad Barre was overthrown in January 1992. And Somalia's warring

clans are preparing to battle for the city's spoils — the air and sea ports — once the U.N. withdrawal is complete.

The Bangladeshis had been guarding the seaport until two companies of U.S. Marines arrived in landing craft to relieve them shortly after midnight. Eight hours later, they were sailing away in two ocean-going ferries.

"They were all signing and having a good time when they left," said Eddie Jones of Baltimore, who has been managing the seaport for the United Nations.

The Pakistanis, who have been holding the airport, will begin pulling back through American and Italian lines Wednesday and depart early Thursday, also aboard ferries for Dar Es Salaam. The airport sits right on the seashore in southern Mogadishu.

Most of the 1,500 American Marines and the 329 Italian troops dug into high sand dunes just a few hundred metres from the sea, establishing a narrow corridor behind the dunes to the seaport, about five kilometres to the north.

The Pakistanis will pass through the American and

Italian perimeter into the corridor and head for the port in an exercise expected to take about three hours early Wednesday morning.

After the Pakistanis sail Thursday, Gen. Zinni said it would take about eight hours for the Americans and Italians to fall back to the beach on which they landed from their positions at the port and in the dunes.

They will go back to their ships the same way they came ashore, on landing craft, hovercraft and amphibious armoured vehicles. Cobra helicopters, Harrier fighter jets and AC-130 aerial gunships will cover the final phase of the withdrawal.

Brigadier-General Aboo Samak, the Malaysian who has been in command of U.N. military forces in Somalia, handed over command to Gen. Zinni in a brief symbolic ceremony on the airport tarmac Tuesday morning.

The American and Italian troops are part of a 14,000-strong force assembled by the United States.

More than half the troops are Americans, including about 2,700 Marines and 5,000 sailors aboard five warships.

Army finds secret tunnel from Gaza to Israel

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Troops have discovered a sizable tunnel used by Palestinians to enter Israel illegally from the Gaza Strip, military officials said. The tunnel, 20 metres long and 2.5 metres wide, had been built in the south of the Strip and came out near the kibbutz of Kerem Shalom. The officials believed the passage had been built recently after Israel sealed off the territory following a Jan. 22 suicide bombing which killed 21 people. Unemployment is estimated as high as 50 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Before the blast 50,000 Palestinians worked legally in Israel and another 20,000 illegally. Israel began to ease the closure a week ago and has granted 15,000 work permits.

French police uncover arms cache

PARIS (AFP) — Police have found a cache of guns and bomb-making equipment in the Paris region after Magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguiere ordered a car park to be searched, an official said Tuesday. The cache, believed to belong to a North African group, included three riot guns, a rocket-launcher, numerous loaded handguns, a Kalashnikov assault rifle, three sub-machineguns and 10,000 rounds, the officials said. Also found were slow fuses, alarm clocks, batteries, military fatigues, field-glasses, field telephones and 500 fake official documents for making false identity cards.

Mujahedeen report disturbances

AMMAN (J.T.) — Reports from Iran say that an indoor soccer match between two teams, Keshavarz and Aseman, in Babol, in northern Mazandaran province, turned into a violent anti-government demonstration by 5,000 spectators at the city's domed Azadi stadium, the main Iranian rebel group has said. The demonstration began at 10:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 24, over the fans' anger at the way the game was being officiated and it rapidly grew into a major anti-government protest, the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq said. "Despite efforts by the Pasdaran stationed at the site, the protesters broke the stadium's windows and inflicted heavy damages to it," the group said in a statement. "The lights went out and all windows were broken. The crowd clashed with anti-riot guards and injured many of them," it said.

Finnish trade minister meets Arafat

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Helsinki's deputy Prime Minister and Trade Minister Pertti Salolainen reviewed possible Finnish projects in the autonomous Palestinian areas with Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat on Tuesday. "We discussed many issues, how to cooperate and coordinate on all levels," Mr. Arafat told reporters after 45 minutes of talks at his seaside headquarters in Gaza City. They focused on "technical projects" including a power station. Mr. Arafat said. Gaza relies on Israel for electricity supplies. Mr. Salolainen and his delegation from the energy, high technology and telecommunications sectors went on to meet Palestinian businessmen. The minister began a three-day visit to Israel and the Gaza Strip to boost economic ties on Monday.

British Airways resumes flights to Lebanon

BEIRUT (R) — British Airways resumed service to Lebanon after a 12-year gap when its first flight from London since 1983 landed at Beirut late on Monday. The airline, which suspended services to Lebanon during the 1975-90 civil war, will fly to Beirut twice weekly. British Mediterranean, a privately-owned, single-aircraft airline already flies to Beirut five times weekly. Some 27 foreign airlines now serve Lebanon in addition to the national carrier Middle East Airlines and Lebanon's cargo carrier Trans Mediterranean Airlines.

Arab-Israeli declines ambassadorship

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Arab-Israeli mayor tipped to be Israel's next ambassador to Finland has pulled out of the running after allegations of wife-beating, foreign ministry officials said Tuesday. Rafik Hajj Yihye, mayor of Taibe, has informed the ministry that he now prefers to devote himself to the northern town. The decision came after he provoked an uproar by telling a newspaper he slapped his wife "from time to time." The ministry has been trying to find a suitable Arab candidate for ambassador for the last 2.5 years. "It is proving very difficult to ensure that Israeli Arabs are engaged at the highest levels of government," Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin told state radio. Hebrew newspapers have reported pressure on potential envoys from within the 800,000 Arab-Israeli community not to represent the Jewish state abroad.

Parliament throws out motion against Rabin

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli parliament on Monday threw out a right-wing censure motion against the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin over its security policies, parliament officials said. The opposition Likud Party put forward the motion to protest comments by Mr. Rabin after he eased the closure of Palestinian territories. Mr. Rabin angered the right-wing by saying that even though it was contrary to the security interests of the country, his decision to gradually ease the closure from Feb. 19 was taken for political reasons. "He who puts the well-being of his enemies above that of his compatriots does not deserve to lead his people," said Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu. The motion of censure was rejected by 59 votes to 48.

Kuwait lends Syria \$65m for cement plant

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Kuwait is to lend Syria 21 million Kuwaiti dinars (\$65 million) to rebuild a cement factory, the president of the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development said Tuesday. Badr Al Homeidi, who arrived in Damascus overnight, said he would discuss work on projects financed by the fund such as developing a telephone network and building electricity plants with Syrian leaders. The fund gave Syria \$125 million in 1991 to improve the phone lines. After talks here, he is due to head for Beirut to sign a loan of \$22 million to improve the electricity grid, a Kuwaiti official said.

Cyprus asks U.N. for action over title-deeds

NICOSIA (R) — The Cyprus government voiced concern to the United Nations on Monday over plans in the breakaway Turkish-Cypriot state to distribute title-deeds for property belonging to Greek Cypriots. President Glafcos Clerides sent a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali to express concern over intentions to formalise the seizure of Greek-Cypriot property. Foreign Minister Alecos Michaelides said. "We expressed our deep concern and our opposition to such a prospect or such a thought... we hope the appropriate action is taken to see the Turkish-Cypriot side abandon such efforts," Mr. Michaelides told reporters.

Lebanese seen targeted in Zaire expulsion

KINSHASA (R) — Zaire's Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo has signed a decree ordering as many as 135 foreign nationals to leave the country within 24 hours, national television announced on Monday night. "The behaviour and the presence of the individuals concerned continue to undermine Zaire's efforts, especially in the monetary, economic and financial fields," the decree said. Mr. wa Dondo's move was expected following a pledge he made during dubious financial dealings. On Friday he issued a first decree ordering 86 foreign nationals out of the country.